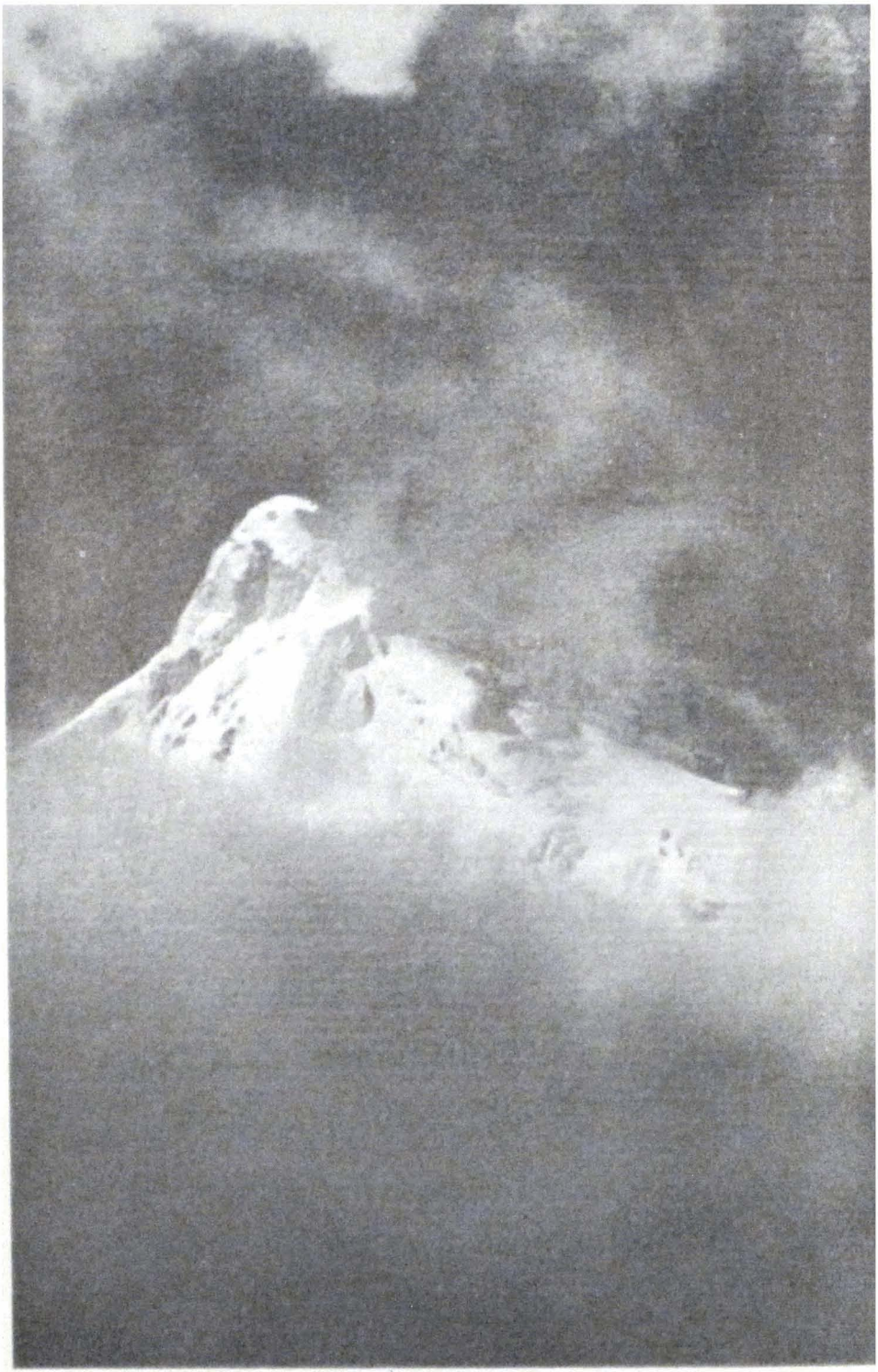


"... WE SAW CHOMOLHARI FAR ABOVE US"

HELVELLYN TO HIMALAYA

Including an Account of the First Ascent of Chomolhari

By

F. SPENCER CHAPMAN

With an Introduction by

The Most Hon. the MARQUIS OF ZETLAND
P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK and LONDON

1940

3718

Printed in Great Britain

Foreword

In August, 1939, I went to Canada as second steward on a grain ship bound from Newcastle to Churchill in Hudson Bay. As I was the only 'passenger', and as we started the voyage by calling at Antwerp for more cargo, I had plenty of time to myself and practically the whole of this book was written on board.

A few weeks later, when I was helping a cousin to rebuild his house on Vancouver Island, the war broke out, and as I held a commission in a Territorial battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders, I was immediately recalled.

After acting as equipment adviser to a force which I was going to accompany to Finland, had not that country been forced so suddenly to make peace, I found myself connected with the Norwegian campaign in much the same capacity, and soon I hope to make a more active use of all the experience gained in the adventures which are described in the following pages.

For these reasons I have had neither the spare time nor the peace of mind to give the manuscript that careful revision which is needed to transform

it from a collection of scattered notes—some descriptive, some autobiographical, some giving bare and almost technical accounts of climbs—into a self-respecting book. I had also hoped that the last chapters would be concerned with Everest, as several of us had intended to make a post-monsoon attempt to reach the summit in 1940; but this, like many other peaceful projects, will have to wait until the war is over. For this reason the conclusion of this book is somewhat abrupt.

Finally, I should like to thank the Editors of the Alpine and Himalayan Club Journals for their permission to make use of articles and photographs, published in their respective journals, of my ascent of Chomolhari.

F. SPENCER CHAPMAN

May 1940

Contents

		PAGE
FOREWORD *by the Author*		v
INTRODUCTION *by the Most Hon. the Marquis of Zetland, P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.*		xi
Chapter I	EARLY YEARS	1
II	FURTHER AFIELD	20
III	FROM LIVERPOOL TO THE HIMALAYA	45
IV	FROM THE TROPICAL FOREST TO THE SNOWS	66
V	SIMVU	94
VI	PLANS AND COMPLICATIONS	127
VII	THE PYRAMID AND THE SPHINX	155
VIII	THE ASCENT OF THE FLUTED PEAK	172
IX	CHOMOLHARI: PREPARATIONS	195
X	CHOMOLHARI: THE ASCENT	222
XI	CHOMOLHARI: THE DESCENT	257
GLOSSARY OF MOUNTAINEERING TERMS		277
INDEX		279
MAP (at end of volume)		

Illustrations

". . . We saw Chomolhari far above us" *Frontispiece*

PLATE *Facing page*

1. Climbing the Flake Crack 14
2. The Meije and the Brèche de la Meije 22
3. North-west Iceland: Guillemots' Eggs for Breakfast
   North-west Iceland: View near Cap Nord 30
4. Sledging Loads up a Frozen Stream . 35
5. Nine Members of the B.A.A.R.E. in their Kayaks in East Greenland 37
6. View from the Requin Hut 42
7. Isaac "pulling" our Sledge
   Camp near Kautokeino, Lapland 44
8. Shipping Hay across the Hooghli
   Bullock Cart at Vizagapatam 56
9. Choosing the Porters
   "We made the Porters run up and down . . ." 62
10. Picking Tea in a Darjeeling Tea Garden
    Simvu and Kangchenjunga from Darjeeling 64
11. Some of the Political Officers' Ponies
    Loading the Mules at Gangtok Bungalow 66
12. The Track through the Forest
    Porters crossing a Torrent 70
13. View of the Snows from Singhik
    Camp beside the Teesta 72
14. Lachen 76

PLATE *Facing page*

15. Porters crossing a Cantilever Bridge Between Lachen and the Zemu Glacier 82

16. Orchids and Tree Ferns Rhododendrons overhanging a Torrent 90

17. Base Camp beside Lateral Moraine of Zemu Glacier 96

18. Rinchen Sherpa, Rinchen Bhutia, Ang Babu, Ang Nima, Nicholson, Cooke, Roaf, Chapman, Pallis 100

19. First Camp on the Way to Simvu Crossing the Zemu Glacier Moraine 110

20. Camp at Upper Simvu Saddle Ski-ing among Crevasses on Simvu 112

21. Our Highest Camp on Simvu Clouds brewing over Kangchenjunga 118

22. The Foot of the Steep Pitch The Steep Pitch on the Simvu Ridge 122

23. Simvu Looking into the Talung Valley 124

24. Phintzu. Kipak Rinchen Sherpa and Ang Nima 134

25. Sikkimese Band at the Garden Party Nepali Band at the Garden Party 140

26. Lachen Headman and Family Jun Singh, the Cook 144

27. Crossing a River in Lhonak Valley Yaks in Lhonak 148

28. Siniolchu from the Langpo La Trying to find a Way up the Langpo La 158

29. Camp near the Summit of Langpo La Approaching the Ridge of the Langpo La 164

PLATE *Facing page*

30. View from the Sphinx Arête
Climbing the Sphinx Arête 168

31. Reconnoitring the Fluted Peak 174

32. The Fluted Peak
Cooke and Harrison near the Summit 178

33. A Tibetan Official and his Wife 196

34. Group of Tibetans below Ning-dzing-zong-ka 198

35. Chomolhari from the Phari Road 200

36. Chomolhari from the Summit of Tang La 204

37. Chomolhari from the Natu La 210

38. Yatung
Kargyu Monastery and the Yatung Valley 214

39. Pack-mules on the Lhasa-India Highway 218

40. A Village Headman wearing Amulets
A Bhutanese Archer 220

41. Kikuli, Pasang and Crawford
Our First Camp 224

42. Prayer Wall on the Way up Chomolhari
Chorten and Prayer Flags 234

43. We reach our Final Ridge at last
Our Camp below the snowline on Chomolhari 236

44. Climbing at 20,500 ft.
Camp at 20,000 ft. before the Party divided 248

45. View showing Route 260

46. Monk, Bhutanese Girl, and Yakherd
A Yakherd's Tent 272

47. The Author
The Author at Phari after Chomolhari 274

Introduction

By the Most Hon. the Marquis of Zetland
P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

IF, as the author of this volume tells us, he was not always fond of mountains, it is nevertheless clear from its opening pages that he had from his earliest years a passion for adventure; and since fate took him at a very early age to the fringe of the Lake District, it is not surprising that he quickly acquired the taste for mountaineering which carried him in due course to the stupendous mountain labyrinth on the eaves of the roof of the world which has provided him with material for the fascinating pages which follow.

The taste once acquired grew prodigiously, and though his ascent of Helvellyn as a small boy and of Cader Idris at the age of 15 may have been mere isolated episodes which in those early days scarcely competed in interest with the study of the fauna and flora of the English countryside which made so powerful an appeal to him, yet his chance acquaintanceship at Cambridge with a set of companions whose talk was all of "belays, pitches and cornices" weighted the scale heavily in favour of the mountains. From that time onwards the reader is hurried from the better-known peaks of the British

Isles to the Alps, from the Alps to Iceland and from Iceland to Greenland—on this latter expedition in the company of Gino Watkins whose contributions to the history of exploration were cut short by an all too early and deeply lamented death in the frozen waters of the Arctic. No time is lost in the telling of these expeditions; indeed we are swept along from country to country and from adventure to adventure until, in a state of mental breathlessness as great as would actually have been the case if we had accompanied him on a memorable attempt to break the Fell Record, we are deposited at Kalimpong on a range of the Himalaya mountains rising from the plains of Bengal. These various expeditions, interesting though they be, constitute, indeed, but the prelude to the story of his experiences in the Eastern Himalayas, culminating in the conquest of Chomolhari—the Divine Queen of Mountains—which, when many years ago it first burst upon my own gaze, created in my mind the impression of a glittering spire of some vast cathedral not made by hands, rising aloft in isolated grandeur 10,000 feet above the elevated tableland which takes its name from the Tibetan village of Phari and which itself varies in height from 14,000 feet to 15,000 feet above sea level. Here at last, whether in the exuberant forests of Sikkim, or on the desiccated highlands of Tibet, or amid the snow and ice of the Zemu Glacier and the tangle of frozen pinnacles that cluster round it, was the real land of the author's dreams, and our ex-

ploration of it in his company takes place at leisure. This is, perhaps, as well, for we are in a land in which the passes between the mountain peaks run to altitudes of 19,000 feet and where on all sides peaks of from 20,000 feet to 25,000 feet tower aloft in bewildering profusion.

The narrative of this observant naturalist and intrepid mountaineer is fraught with episodes exciting the whole gamut of the emotions. There is an amazing thrill in the story of the abortive attempt to reach the top of Simvu, a satellite of Kangchenjunga rising to a height of over 22,000 feet out of the vast pit of the Talung Valley—an attempt foiled at the eleventh hour only by the presence of a huge and unsuspected crevasse. And we read, almost with a sigh of relief, of the successful termination of a long-drawn struggle to reach the 23,500-feet summit of the Sphinx. But our nerves, happily perhaps, are not kept constantly at stretch; and for those who have had experience of these or similar lands there is keen delight in reviving memories of "the early morning fragrance of the jungle before the fierce sun and heat have liberated the ranker smells of midday", or of "the black line of a moraine standing out above a sea of cloud", or, again, of "the colouring of the mountain-sides reminiscent of Corot's earlier paintings". The immensity and the challenge of Nature's frowning and forbidding battlements are never far away, but there is, none the less, a softer background coloured with liberal splashes of

purple primulas, of sky-blue irises and gentians and of the pale-blue poppy; shot with a variety of darting butterflies and made audible with the song of birds. And it is an added delight to realise as one reads, that these things are written of with a knowledge carefully acquired, certainly, but inspired by an instinctive love of nature.

The series of mountain ascents prompted by that strange but irresistible urge to set foot on a mountain summit, cost what it may—yea, even life itself—underwent a seven months' interruption while Captain Chapman accompanied the British Diplomatic Mission of 1936 to Lhasa; but of his experiences as a member of the party he has given an account elsewhere, and the closing chapters of the present volume are devoted to a description of the ascent and descent of Chomolhari, "thought by many", of whom I may claim to be one, "to be the most beautiful in the whole length of the Himalaya". It is also, perhaps, in the eyes of the Tibetans at any rate, the most sacred, and it is scarcely surprising, even though permission for the attempt to be made had been given by the hierarchy at Lhasa and by the Maharaja of Bhutan, that little encouragement was forthcoming from the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside. The general view was, indeed, summed up concisely by the bungalow attendant at Phari in a laconic exchange with the visitors—"You are young. Chomolhari cannot possibly be climbed. You may not return at all. Why not give it up and return to

Yatung where it is already summer?" That there was logic in the argument was undeniable—"Why not?" echoes the author, and adds, "I could not answer him". But the urge was strong and not to be denied and the decision to persevere was justified by the event.

One is sorely tempted to follow here the epic of those palpitating days from dawn on May 17th, 1937, when "the stars shone with unabated brilliance though the eastern sky had paled and the mountains glimmered with a strange luminescence and the summit of Chomolhari glowed like the crater of an active volcano" to the afternoon of May 21st when, on the very summit of the mountain regarded hitherto as impregnable, Captain Chapman shook hands with Pasang, the very young, wholly inexperienced, and rather dour-looking porter who alone stayed the whole course with him. But it is a temptation to be resisted, for the story of the ascent and still more perhaps of the descent, is one which can be told adequately only by the man who lived through it; and as told by him, with no reaching after effect, it constitutes a drama of physical endurance and of the dominion of the spirit over the flesh which will be accorded by those who read it the high place to which it is entitled in the long and stirring annals of individual endeavour.

ZETLAND

CHAPTER ONE

Early Years

I HAVE not always been fond of mountains. The enthusiasms of one's childhood are settled by circumstance rather than by an inherent urge in any definite direction: one boy is brought up beside the sea and becomes an ardent yachtsman; another is much in contact with a man who has a passion for collecting fossils and is influenced accordingly. In other cases the environment of a boy's own home and the interests of his parents, curiously enough, have a contrary effect upon him, and he feels antagonism for the very things which his father hopes he is learning to love. I know a man whose heart has always been in the mountains; from earliest youth his children were taken up hills and made to bathe before breakfast in icy lakes, with the sad result that they have developed a violent distaste for the country, especially mountainous country, and are now happily living in cities. My own parents died when I was very young and I was brought up by an elderly parson and his wife in a village on the edge of the Lake District. As my guardian had little time to spare from his parish duties, my elder brother and I were left very much to ourselves. We used to go for long walks in the country; there were

fells near at hand, but as far as I can remember we preferred the winding lanes and streams of the lower valleys. Our chief interest at that time, derived from the memory and books of our father, was in butterflies and wild flowers. Mountains hardly entered into our scheme of things, and rock-climbing we had not even heard of. Only once do I remember making a more ambitious expedition into the hills, and that was when my tutor took me up to the top of Dunmail Raise on the back of his motor-cycle and we climbed Helvellyn by way of Grisedale Tarn and Dollywaggon Pike. This was a tremendous walk for a small boy and the apparent vastness of the Lake District fells stirred my imagination. It gave me an impression of beauty, immensity, and physical exhaustion which I shall never forget. But for some reason this expedition, being so unlike any previous adventure, remained for many years an isolated experience, as if it were impossible to hope to repeat it.

After a disastrous term in the kindergarten of a girls' school in Kendal, I was sent, at the age of 8, to a private school at Ben Rhydding, on the edge of the Yorkshire moors. The headmaster—a man of infinite kindness and understanding—was an enthusiastic entomologist; and here again the moors served as a happy hunting-ground for oak egger or emperor moth caterpillars, and were not climbed for their own sake, with the exception of the Cow and Calf rocks at Ilkley, whose attraction was that they were out of bounds. I also served a valuable

apprenticeship as a tree-climber, but here again the incentive was birds' eggs or chestnuts for 'conkers', and the fact that tree-climbing was forbidden.

I left my Private School with a good knowledge of gardening and a vast enthusiasm for all forms of natural history. Lessons, I considered, were things to be avoided by all possible means, fair or foul, and organised games were a waste of a fine afternoon. My love of adventure had led me into more scrapes than any other boy in the school, and as I did not excel at work or games I began to feel I was rather a failure. To vindicate myself to others I posed as one who had no regard either for authority or for his own safety, and to justify myself to myself I concentrated all my energies on my particular interests.

At the age of 14 I went to Sedbergh, a school which is set in the midst of wild moorland country; it was possible to run for twenty miles there without meeting another human being. I was not much good at class work, I loathed the monotonous bell-regulated routine of school life, and I still could not see any point in spending every afternoon hitting or kicking a leather-covered ball when I might have been fishing the Lune or trying to photograph the peregrine falcon's eyrie on Coombe Scaur. In my first summer term I was beaten by the Head of the House four days running for refusing to play cricket, then the matter was reported to my Housemaster, who was luckily a wise and sympathetic man. He said that if I really felt so strongly about it, I need not play

cricket so long as I did not waste my time. And I did not waste my time. We had three half-holidays per week. That meant if I took lunch and supper with me—or did without—I was free from soon after one o'clock, when the morning's work ended, until seven o'clock when preparation began. As I could travel at an average speed of six miles per hour over the fells, those six hours gave me a magnificent range of country to explore. I did no roped climbing at that time, but some of the descents to ravens' or peregrines' nests at Black Force, Cautley Spout and Coombe Scaur reduced the margin of safety to its slenderest limit. Often my life depended on a root of mountain ash or bunch of heather, and the screes I ran—in gym shoes too—were steeper than I would choose to run nowadays even in boots.

But it was good practice; it gave me self-reliance and I could forget myself in the rhythm of tired muscles, in the fascination of following a compass course over the hills in thick mist, in the determination to go just one mile further before turning.

In the holidays I was much alone. My guardian had retired to a village in Somerset, and I lived with another parson in the same part of the Lake District; my debt to him is more than I can ever repay, but he too was a busy parish priest and my brother was away from home. I spent nearly all my time wild-fowling and bird-watching on the shores of Morecambe Bay. I suppose the naturalist's and the hunter's instincts are equally strong; in those

days it did not seem odd that I could spend hour after hour in a hide watching birds, learning their secret ways, more thrilled by the sight of a new or rare species than by anything else in the world, and then, in the winter months, plot to shoot those same birds.

I used to go down to the shore before it was light to take up my position in the hideout in the mud-flats. All the bird notes were familiar: the soft purring of dunlin, the thin querulous whistle of widgeon, the distant swelling chorus of thousands of curlew, oyster-catcher, lapwing, ringed plover and redshank at the tide's edge, and sometimes, if I was lucky, the loud distinctive whistle of a greenshank or the plaintive note of grey plover. Then the spell would be broken by the sudden whirring of wings overhead, as yet indiscernible in the dim light. I could recognise them by the sound: the sibilant whistle of golden-eye, as if their joints needed oiling; the muffled throb of teal hurtling through the air; the regular beat of mallard, at first faint, then strong, then fading again into the distance, and from far off the thrilling sound of geese launching themselves into the air, and calling to each other with clear clarion cries. Will they come over the hide? Frozen fingers close on the half-forgotten gun, the body becomes tense as the air is filled with the beat of wings and the muttering undertone of grey geese as they keep in touch with each other. The gun's flash startles the quiet dawn. There is a thudding

splash as a heavy body hits the sodden mud-flats. Nothing can be greater than the thrill of one's first goose.

When I was 15 I went to stay with a friend at Talyllyn Lake in North Wales. There I climbed Cader Idris, my first real mountain since the ascent of Helvellyn, in record-breaking time, and developed a great enthusiasm for trout-fishing.

About this time I learnt the art of poaching, which gave more scope for skill and excitement than anything I had known before, and I learnt to 'guddle' trout, to set horse-hair snares for grouse, and to observe the tracks of game while leaving none myself. Sometimes it was too exciting. I remember well the pain that two of us suffered, extracting pellets from each other's backs with the point of a rusty penknife after a successful long range right and left from an irate gamekeeper. And how one night netting salmon we were surprised by the beck-watcher, and had to spend a frozen hour hiding beneath the bank with only our heads above water while he and his dog systematically searched the waterside. But as one grew up these exciting pastimes had to be left behind and one was forced to accept an adult sense of the sanctity of possessions.

I learned to ride at about this time. It happened that a famous breeder of thoroughbreds lived in our village, and he was always glad of somebody who would help to exercise his horses. This suited me very well, and though it was rather anxious work

with valuable animals which danced all over the road whenever a car passed, I became a tolerable rider. I also became a keen follower of the Kendal Otter Hounds and whenever possible went out with one of the Lake District packs of foxhounds, where all the field follow for miles and miles over the fells on foot.

Although the mountains of the Lake District were in sight of my home and of the shore where most of my day was spent, I had no great desire to visit them. We used to go there occasionally for picnics, but I was more interested in the birds or wild flowers that we found than in the hills themselves. I knew no mountaineers or rock-climbers among my contemporaries, and I had read nothing about their activities.

But when I went up to Cambridge in 1926, at informal Sunday evenings in the house of that great mountaineer, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, I found myself suddenly in the midst of a set where the talk was all of belays, pitches and cornices. I had known Winthrop Young some years before, when he took a house in the Lake District, but as he had then only recently lost his leg in the war, and had not yet evolved the marvellous technique by which he subsequently climbed many of the major Alpine peaks with the aid of an artificial limb, he had not been disposed to talk of mountaineering in those days. I soon joined the Cambridge Mountaineering Club and started roof-climbing, as there were no rocks

within a reasonable distance of Cambridge. We took this very seriously, using a rope, and working out the climbs with the greatest care. We did it partly to keep in climbing trim, and also because it provided some excitement in the routine of academic life in the fens. The climbing had to be undertaken in the small hours of the morning, and its dangers were enhanced by the need to avoid the vigilance of college porters and others. For the authorities took every possible step to prevent roof-climbing, which not only provided a means of getting out of one's college after the gates had been officially locked, but also did considerable damage to the roofs.

We were very strongly opposed to the people who advertised their activities by tying umbrellas or other articles to the summits of conspicuous buildings: such advertisement we considered unnecessary and in very bad taste.

My first real rock-climbing was done in North Wales in 1927. I bought an ancient motor-bicycle and sidecar for £8, and on this three of us travelled, with many strange adventures, from Cambridge to Capel Curig. We camped at the foot of Tryvfan and climbed the Milestone Buttress and spent some happy hours on the easier routes up the Idwal Slabs. I did not see the eclipse of the sun—which was one of our objects in going to North Wales—but I developed a strong liking for rock-climbing. It was an excuse to go camping in wild country, and provided an outlet for an unlimited amount of physical

energy. It was also as dangerous and exciting as one cared to make it; I felt a strong satisfaction in having succeeded in getting up some climb, during which I had probably been more terrified than I would have admitted even to myself, for I have never been able to overcome an inherent fear of precipitous places. Finally, it introduced a new form of companionship and interdependence with the other men on the rope.

My chief training as a rock-climber was gained during the years I climbed with T. E. Hicks in the Lake District. Our first climb was the Little Gully on Pavey Ark in Great Langdale. We did this in walking shoes and without a rope. I remember it for the extraordinary profusion of wild flowers in the gully and for the fact that in the middle of the climb we surprised a fox. Later we must have done at least a hundred climbs together. He was a brilliant climber and, moreover, a very careful one. I was harder to tire than he was, but I was sometimes unable to follow him up a particularly difficult section. Together we did most of the better-known climbs in the Lake District. I enjoyed this climbing tremendously, but was usually very frightened on the really difficult pitches. A handhold might break away at the critical moment, and a bootnail could so easily slip from the tiny ledge on which one's whole weight was poised. The New West climb on Pillar, or Kern Knotts Crack on Great Gable seemed to me about the limit of reasonable enjoyment.

Being normally muscular and stout-hearted but having no genius for acrobatics, I found such climbs as the North West on Pillar—especially the Oppenheimer's chimney pitch—most unpleasant. I was absolutely terrified, and though I was elated afterwards, I was miserable at the time, and used to swear I would give up climbing if I ever lived to reach the top.

I also climbed in the Snowdon District, on Ben Nevis, and in Skye. I did most of the climbs that were then classed as 'severe', but the 'very severes' I usually avoided. Though I often climbed alone I did very little actual leading, as I was usually fortunate enough to be with more experienced men, better able than myself to take the responsibility for other people's lives.

For those who do not understand the art, I will explain the normal procedure of rock-climbing in this country so that they will understand the inevitable technicalities which—though I have reduced them to a minimum—are bound to occur in a book on mountaineering. Let us take a party of three people, all of whom have done some roped climbing, but the leader, we will suppose, has been in the same district before and knows many of the climbs. Guide-books are published by the various clubs and these give detailed descriptions of the climbs, pitch by pitch (a pitch is the name given to a section of a rock climb) and a classification of the various climbs as to difficulty, such as very severe, severe, difficult,

moderate, etc. The older school of climbers almost invariably wore heavy boots nailed with soft iron nails called *clinkers* into which the rock can bite, or sharper hard nails called *tricounis* which give a grip on the minutest hold. These boots were equally useful for scree-running or fell-walking. The modern climber has invented many varieties of nails but prefers rubbers or rope soles. These make climbs possible which would be out of the question in boots, but on the other hand they become unsafe on wet rock.

The leader then, considering his own prowess, the weather, and the experience and equipment of his party, decides what climb he will take them up. It may necessitate a walk of several hours from the camp or inn to the foot of the climb. Personally, I like this just as much as the actual climbing, but nowadays many people seem to consider it merely a necessary nuisance. The leader then finds the foot of the climb, either from his previous experience or from the guide-book. Usually there is a small cairn there and the scratches on the rock from the boots of previous climbers indicate the route. The party then ties on the rope, being careful to use the recognised knots, and the leader starts up the first pitch. The length of his lead depends on the amount of rope available, the frequency of suitable anchorages and the confidence he has in himself and in his second man. Suppose the climb is not particularly difficult, and he leads out forty

feet: he then finds a suitable stance and proceeds to make a belay. The object of this is to prevent his being pulled off the rocks if the second falls, and to enable him to anchor the second in such an eventuality. The form of belay depends upon the nature of the rocks. If possible, he knots a loop in the rope and puts it over some protuberance, then, standing as firmly as possible, he passes the rope over his shoulders in such a way that he can bear the greatest possible strain should the second fall off. Then, as the second climbs up to him, he takes in the slack so that the rope does not get in the way of the climber. Thus, if the second falls off, the weight comes on to the rope at once and is lessened by its elasticity, and the leader can easily hold him and either pull him up to the next hold or lower him to the last. The rope is only there in case of emergency, but it gives great confidence to the climbers and can also be used to make a hurried descent of the rocks if the party is overtaken by darkness or storm.

As soon as the second man reaches the leader's stance, the latter transfers his belay to him and the third man is brought up in the same way. If there is not much room, the leader starts on the next pitch before the third man comes up; if the climbing is easy, the first and last men move at once, the middle man acting as an anchor. It should therefore always be possible to hold the second and third men should they fall off, while the leader can only fall

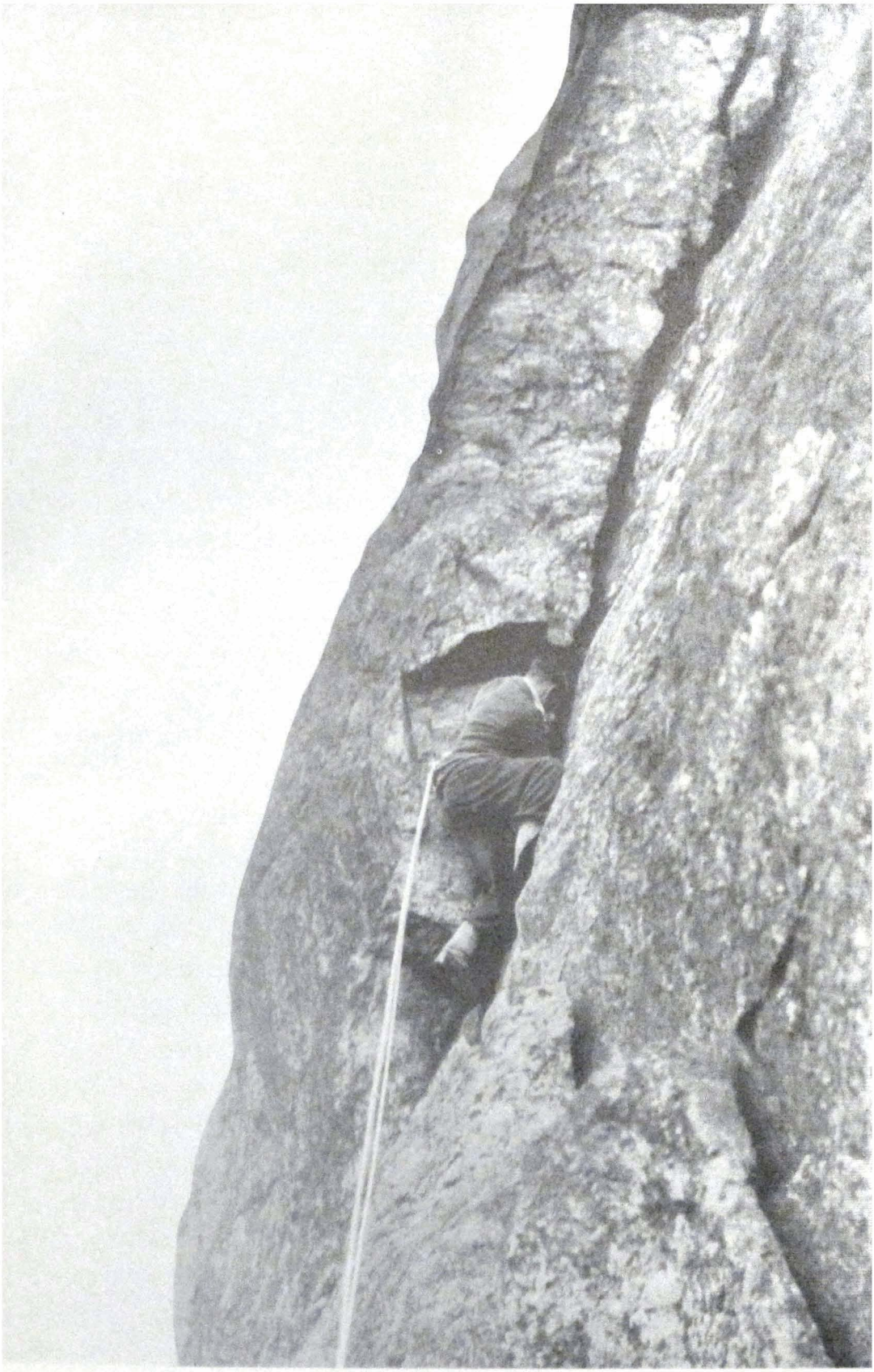
a limited distance. When traversing—that is moving sideways across the rocks—the leader can probably hitch the rope over any protuberances as he passes, so that he will not fall far, and in any case he would probably swing pendulumwise instead of falling vertically downwards. But it might happen that if the leader fell the second could not hold him. If he falls when he is thirty feet directly above the second, even if he does not knock him off his stance, a tremendous pull will come upon the unfortunate second from the resulting fall of sixty feet; if he does manage to hold him his hands and shoulders will probably be skinned, and even then, with the leader's inert body dangling thirty feet below him, he may be unable to pull or lower him to a place of safety.

From all this it follows that the leader simply must not fall. If he is climbing on recognised routes, he must not tackle anything that might be beyond his powers, and in any case he must not climb a pitch unless he is certain he can get back again. It is only by adhering strictly to these rules that accidents are avoided. Often, watching inexperienced parties juggling with the rope on climbs which are obviously beyond their capabilities, I am amazed that accidents are not even more frequent. In the old days a climber served a long apprenticeship before leading, but nowadays this is not considered necessary, and the resulting increase in accidents—though admittedly the number of climbers has

also increased—has brought great discredit on the mountaineering fraternity.

When men of equal ability are on the rocks together they will probably take it in turn to lead. In mountaineering, as in anything else, a man has his off-days, and moments when he feels that even the Central Buttress on Scafell would present no insuperable difficulties. Sometimes a party is composed of climbers each of whom specialises in one particular type of rock: one leads on exposed buttresses, another up chimneys and a third on bare slabs.

Personally, I have been involved in very few rock-climbing accidents and I have never fallen when leading, or known my leader to fall. I remember once, at Cambridge, several of us decided that we could no longer bear the misty flat horizon of the fen country. We left Cambridge by car very early one Sunday morning bound for some rock slabs near Matlock. Gino Watkins was in the party, also Jack Longland, Lawrence Wager and Charles Warren, all of whom have since distinguished themselves on Everest. We were scrambling about, unroped, on the rocks. I was at the foot of the slabs watching the others. Suddenly Warren was seen to be in difficulties; his foothold had broken away and he was left hanging by his hands from a narrow ledge. He could not get down and he had not the strength left to pull himself up. Longland, who was climbing just above, rapidly came down to his aid



CLIMBING THE FLAKE CRACK, CENTRAL BUTTRESS, SCAFELL

and was able to grasp his wrists just as he was forced to let go of the rock. But, none too securely placed himself, Longland could only hold him for a few agonising seconds before he had to let him drop. He fell for about twenty feet, landed on a grassy ledge, telescoped, then shot outwards again, to fetch up in a sycamore tree another twenty feet lower down. He was unhurt.

Occasionally when climbing with Hicks I had to accept the assistance of a gentle pull from the rope above me. Only once did I really fall, and there was some excuse for that. One very wet afternoon in October we were climbing Walker's Gully on Pillar Rock. We had already done several climbs and were rather tired. The climb is classified in the Fell and Rock Climbing Club Guide as "severe —last pitch very severe." We were almost at the top and were climbing a vertical wall from the temporary security of a small level platform in a gully which was just too wide to 'chimney up', that is, to jam oneself between two rock walls and to wriggle up by extreme muscular exertion. Further out, the gully narrowed over a formidable overhang to the foot of the climb. The only hold to assist in leaving the platform was a tiny ledge, an inch and a half wide and sloping downwards. Hicks found that his nails would not grip the wet rock, so he removed his boots and clambered up in stocking-feet. Soon afterwards he found a stance out of my sight and shouted to me to come on.

He had a very stout belay and advised me not to bother to remove my boots. Just as I had all my weight on the sloping hold, and before I had found the larger handhold above, my nails slipped off and I shot outwards, to jam in the narrower part of the chimney. Hicks, listening from above, heard my warning shout, felt a sudden pull, and then the rope became slack in his hands. Thinking that the rope had severed in some way, he strained his ears for a dull thud coming up from below. But instead of that he heard a cheerful voice saying that I had discovered an easier variation, for it was quite a simple matter to chimney up where the walls of the gully were nearer together.

Another time Hicks and I were standing on the level platform at the top of Easter Gully on Dow Crags and were just roping up preparatory to climbing Broderick's Crack. Suddenly there was a startling noise up above and we were just in time to dodge the body of a sheep which fell sheer for three hundred feet, to land with a thud where we had been standing. As we moved forward to examine it, several boulders, disturbed by the sheep when it lost its footing, crashed and broke into a thousand fragments in the very place from which we had just moved. The danger from falling stones, especially now that so many people climb, is one of the greatest perils on the rocks.

I did a certain amount of solitary climbing at this time. Though this practice is deprecated by many

mountaineers, it certainly gives one confidence and helps one to attain that rhythmic speed of movement which is so necessary in the Alps or Himalaya when the whole party has to move together over difficult ground. I remember once in Skye I was climbing alone up the steep side of the so-called Inaccessible Pinnacle on Sgurr nan Gillean. As I reached the summit I met Bobby Woodhouse, a well-known climber of the old school, leading a party up the other side. He had taught me physics at Sedbergh, but in spite of that we were great friends. In answer to my cordial salutation he gave me a vigorous lecture on the iniquities and dangers of solitary climbing: I immediately descended by the way I had come up.

One of the most satisfactory climbs I have ever done was a solitary ascent of the Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis, the longest rock-climb in the British Isles. I had walked with a non-climbing friend to the summit in the afternoon; we were due to leave Fort William the next day after breakfast. At three o'clock in the morning I slipped out of the hotel and ran to the foot of the rocks; I forget how long it took to do the climb, including the more difficult Douglas Boulder, but I was at the summit of Ben Nevis again soon after dawn and back in the hotel for breakfast at nine.

I have only once got into serious difficulties when climbing alone. That was in Wales, when we were camping at the foot of Tryvfan. Feeling energetic

—and also because a stream had overflowed in the night and my sleeping-bag was more or less floating —I got up very early, and putting on shorts, a rugger jersey and gym shoes, I decided to run to the top of Tryvfan by following the Heather Traverse, a path that slants gently up the foot of the rocks until it doubles back along the easy summit ridge. The mist was down over the top of the mountain, and meeting what I realised later was only a dip in the track, I thought I had reached the place where the way led up over steep but not difficult rocks. I started to climb, and soon came on to a tiny grassy ledge where I suddenly saw, looming through the mist, a sheep and a lamb. I thought that if I advanced towards them they would show me the way up, but apparently I was guarding the only exit from the grassy ledge and the sheep, fearing for her lamb, immediately charged. I threw myself flat on my face and the mother, followed by her lamb, actually touched me as they fled past my inert body to safety. This was disturbing, but imagining that the summit ridge was only just above me, I decided to carry on upwards, still not realising that I had left the Heather Traverse far too soon and was on the steep rock-face. I soon found the marks of climbers' nails on the rocks and worked my way up what I afterwards identified as the Gashed Crag route, one of the hardest climbs on the mountain, and certainly not one to be tacked alone in gym shoes, on wet rocks.

Rock-climbing in the British Isles, because of the variety, both in nature and severity, of the climbs, is a most valuable apprenticeship for a mountaineer, and on no recognised climb in the Alps or Himalaya have I found any pitches more difficult than some of those on Snowdon or the Cuillins. But it is unfortunate that some of those who have not been lucky enough to graduate to mountains beyond our islands should concern themselves solely with technical problems and follow routes which strain the limit of safety to breaking point. Surely they fail to appreciate the real spirit of mountaineering.

CHAPTER TWO

Further Afield

In the summer of 1928 I had my first taste of mountaineering as opposed to rock-climbing, as a member of a party which traversed the Meije in the Dauphiné Alps. F. R. G. Chew and I were staying at Grenoble, trying to learn French. It was very hot and muggy down there in August, though we had kept ourselves as fit as possible by working out some new routes up Les Trois Pucelles. Then we had a letter from Jack Longland and Lawrence Wager, who had been doing some serious climbing in the Dauphiné, asking us to join them on an unguided traverse of the Meije (13,500 feet). This is one of the longest and more difficult of the better-known climbs in the Alps; we were neither of us in very good training and I had never even handled an ice-axe—except on the winter cornices of Ben Nevis. It is a safe principle that in guideless parties every member should be capable of leading ; but if the two experts were prepared to take the risk we were certainly ready to join them.

The journey up to La Grave, where we were to start the climb, was memorable. We went up on my old motor-cycle, a machine more noted for its speed than its reliability. I remember we were held

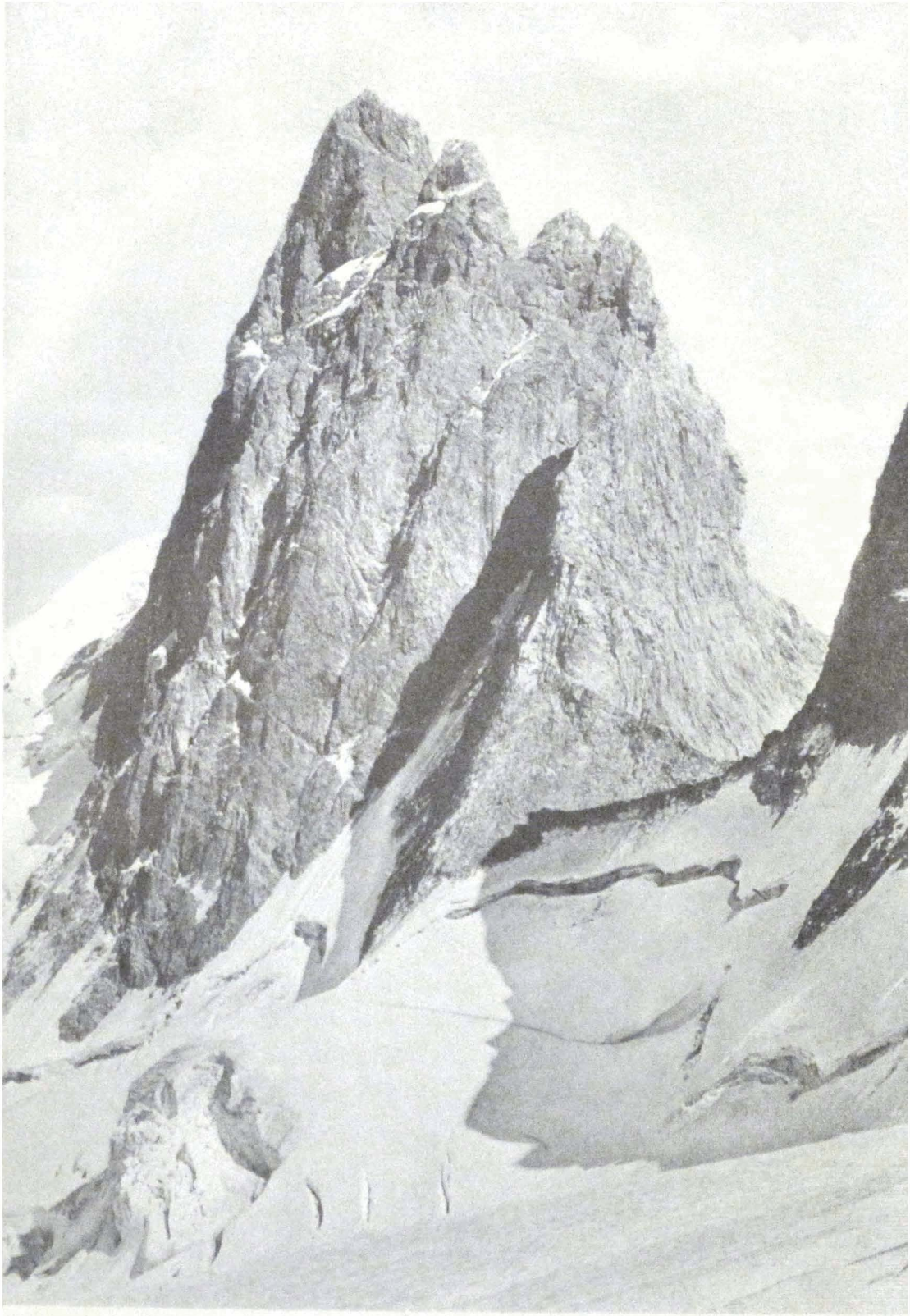
up behind a travelling circus on one of the steep winding Alpine passes; the truck containing the elephant was far too large for us to pass and after roaring along in bottom gear for some time the engine seized up. However, at last we reached La Grave and I saw the full glory of Alpine flowers for the first time. I had found the rare *lloydia* and purple saxifrage among the rocks of North Wales, and the exquisite *Primula scottica* on the Sutherland hills, but here all the varieties whose single blooms one had sought in remote corners of the British Isles, or admired in the rockery of some skilful gardener, were growing in marvellous profusion: dense, flower-covered cushions of silene and androsace, masses of scarlet and white cyclamen, wild roses and almost luminous blue gentians.

That afternoon our companions appeared, looking grim and weather-beaten after a fortnight's serious climbing. We sought out the tiny inn where we were to stay. In the evening some men in curious helmets entered; we never discovered if they were the local fire brigade or some strange frontier militia, but a dance was given in their honour and we had no sleep that night. Music was provided by an ancient musical box in the room just beneath our bedroom: three tunes followed each other with maddening monotony. At 2 o'clock we got up. An hour later we left the hut and set off up the steep track towards the Brèche de la Meije, on the other side of which lay the Promontoire Hut where we were to

spend the night. Soon we heard the shouts of what appeared to be a cragfast tourist on a grassy ledge of a steep precipice. But when we set about rescue operations he walked away with a bunch of flowers in his hand, still shouting. Apparently he was the village idiot. Then I met my first crevasses, great cracks and fissures formed in the glacier by irregularities in the bed over which the ice flowed, or by the sheer weight of the ice as it moved over a convex surface. The vast scale of these tangled ice serracs and cavernous gashes suddenly appearing in the rounded curves and hollows of the glacier was something I had been quite unprepared for.

Having reached the top of the Brèche we glissaded down to the hut, practising the use of the ice-axe on the way. This was frightening but exhilarating. The slope was so steep and the snow so hard that if we had once got out of control we should have slid downwards with ever increasing velocity. But the rope and ice-axe were there to prevent this. By grasping the ice-axe firmly and leaning back on the shaft which drags in the snow it can be used as a brake. If one does lose control it is necessary to roll over on to one's front and to dig the longer spike of the axe into the snow so that, with all one's weight on the top of it, it acts as an anchor and gradually brings one to a standstill. How many times since then have I saved my own and others' lives by this means!

At the Promontoire Hut Chew and I had pemmican



THE MEIJE AND THE BRÈCHE DE LA MEIJE

and porridge for the first time in our lives, and were both violently sick. Pemmican, the roast beef of explorers, is a very concentrated meat food containing a high percentage of fat and albumen which makes it an especially suitable diet in cold climates. It has the consistency and appearance of coffee fudge and tastes salty, gritty and not unlike the dregs of strong beef-tea. The Danish variety contains nuts and fruit. It can be eaten raw, but is usually made into soup, with or without the addition of oatmeal, which is very filling and extremely sustaining. It is thought that the Red Indians were the first to make it by pounding down dried buffalo meat and mixing it with fat. But whatever the truth of its history, it is an invaluable commodity which the traveller should not be without.

I also had my first experience of mountain sickness here, though how much of this was due to the pemmican I cannot say. I had a terrible headache, especially at the back of the eyes, violent diarrhœa and vomiting, and an overpowering desire to go to sleep and not to wake up again. Chew was in much the same state, so we went to sleep while the other two roped up and prospected the first part of the route we were to follow next day. However, we were soon disturbed by a noisy French party whose guides sang songs and drank red wine far into the night.

We left before dawn, carrying a lantern to light us up the first part of the climb. As it was still dark when we reached the rock the leader had to climb

with the lantern held in his teeth. And the climbing was not at all easy. The chief difficulty was the speed at which we had to go. Frequently all four of us would be moving together over ground which we would have negotiated singly and with the utmost respect had it been on Scafell or Snowdon. I was terrified, but at the same time I found it strangely exhilarating to be climbing in the half light over such difficult rock. I had never before realised how important rhythm is in climbing; I found I could overcome weariness and even fear by moving in a definite rhythm; my own momentum seemed to carry me on, or perhaps it was the momentum of the rest of the party. At last we reached the glacier Carré and stopped for a few minutes' rest and some breakfast. The French party passed us here and held us up later at the Cheval Rouge, a rock pitch as difficult as anything I had climbed at home. Soon after this we reached the summit of the Grand Pic. The view was superb. I never had much of a case against scoffers who asked why I did not go up by the ordinary route when I had sweated up some sodden gully on Pavey Ark, descended by another route and then followed a more exciting way to the top of the rocks again. But here it was different; there was no other way: only by undergoing all that hard work and terror could we be here at all, and it was also undeniable that our senses were somehow purged and quickened by the muscular and nervous effort. And there

was another element in our triumph: the four of us had got here without guides, by our own efforts —though Chew and I could claim little credit for that—and we were dependent on one another to get safely back to the rest of the world, which seemed at that moment so remote.

The dawn had been gradual and unobtrusive; one moment it was night and then, before one was conscious of any great change, it was day. The frosty stars had been clear, but now it was overcast, and tiny crystals of snow were forming—so small that they dissolved the moment they landed on rocks or garments. A sudden gust of wind flurried the snow which lay in pockets of the rock. The experts feared that there was a blizzard brewing and told us we must make haste to get off the mountain. Chew and I had been climbing as fast as we thought humanly possible; now we must go faster still. A mile of knife-edge ridge lay between us and the next summit and then there was a perilous descent to the other hut. The French party descended into the Brèche Zsigmondy on a double rope, and we overtook them here and held our lead, although it was very difficult to get off the lower glacier out of the Brèche. The scramble along the knife-edge ridge to the next peak, the Doigt de Dieu, was a nightmare, but we reached it at last, and an hour's perilous descent, still at full speed, took us off the rock. We had been climbing for twelve hours. Longland and Wager,

experienced climbers in perfect training, had been going as fast as they possibly could, and Chew and I, inexperienced and straight from the relaxing heat of Grenoble, had had to keep up with them. Our reaction on stopping was to be violently sick, but after a meal and a rest we were ready to descend the 5000 feet of easy rock and scree to La Grave.

This was not without excitement. Fine scree is easy to run. The small stones slide down with one and if they start going too fast, it is easy to jump aside and let the moving staircase go on. With larger stones it is more difficult; not only does the scree run unevenly, but sometimes the large stones which are disturbed come rushing after one with terrific speed. It is therefore best, if a large party is descending a scree slope, for its members either to go singly or to follow different routes. On this occasion Chew and I took one scree shoot while Longland and Wager chose another well to the side. We agreed to meet at the bridge over the river which could be seen at the foot of the valley. Suddenly, as we were enjoying the change of exercise and the exhilarating descent, there was a noise like the whining of a shell over our heads, followed by a crash down below. Then several more missiles went whizzing just above us and we hastily took cover until the fusillade was over. Soon afterwards the other two appeared; apparently our screes had joined not far above and Chew and I, being some way ahead, were in the

direct passage of the stones; as some of them were as big as footballs there would not have been much of us left had we been hit.

Next day I went up alone on my motor-bicycle to the top of the Col de Galibier. I was very lucky to reach the top at all, for on the way up, just as I was negotiating one of the many S bends, I suddenly caught sight of a large black and white shrike, of a species I had never seen before, and I was so thrilled by this new bird that I took my eyes off the road for a second and all but drove over the edge into the gorge below. When I reached the summit I walked up to the top of the hill, from which there was an excellent view of the Meije, and I tried to analyse the feelings which my triumph of yesterday had roused in me. I have tried to do the same thing many times since then: to formulate a philosophy of mountaineering; to try to justify to myself and others this overpowering desire to reach the top of a mountain. The attraction certainly cannot lie in the view to be obtained from the summit; for as a rule the view is better when you are looking *at* mountains, not *from* them. It is not solely for the physical satisfaction of making the ascent, though there is no better exercise in the world than climbing. I hope it is not simply in order to have the gratification of telling other people about one's achievement ; nor for the self-justification of carrying out a difficult climb in spite of contrary odds. No, there is a greater satisfaction than that in it: the beauty and aloofness of high

mountains and the hard physical effort which is required to visit them combine to produce an emotion which has an inexpressible charm for those who have experienced it. Mountains have always been acclaimed as the dwelling-place of the gods and the mountain spirit reveals himself at such moments to his worshippers.

On the way home from Grenoble I had an adventure which very nearly ended my life. Suddenly, as I was speeding along a road, I felt a sharp and excruciating pain over my heart. I discovered that a hornet had become entangled in my woolly scarf and crawling inside my clothes had stung me. I felt very sick, but decided to make for Avallon, the next town, and see a doctor. The road was perfectly straight and I was going along it at about 50 miles per hour when I suddenly fainted and crashed into the rough ground beside the road. The motorcycle was completely flattened but I was unhurt, except for a few bruises. A garage was able to do a very complicated operation on the machine, grafting in various parts of other wreckage they had in stock, and I managed to catch the boat at Havre that night, none the worse.

In the summer of 1929, as soon as I had taken my degree at Cambridge, I organised an expedition to Iceland with two medical-student friends. Our alleged object was to collect plants and make bird observations for the British Museum, but actually I wanted to experience again the thrill of setting out

on some difficult or dangerous enterprise with friends of similar tastes—in other words, to go on an expedition. Also, I had not decided what I was going to do for the rest of my life, and I felt that it would be easier to achieve the detachment necessary to make such a momentous decision in the clearer atmosphere of Iceland.

After calling at the Faroes and the Westmann Islands the three of us reached Reykjavik, travelling steerage on an ancient ship called the *Botnia*; then, having assimilated as much local knowledge as was available, we set off to walk right across the north of the country, carrying all the necessary equipment on our backs. That was the trouble; in our state of inexperience, everything seemed necessary, and we found ourselves starting off with ungainly loads of 70 or 80 lbs. each. Here is an example of our extraordinary ignorance and lack of common sense: we had decided, to save expense, to have sleeping-bags made up in Reykjavik, where eiderdown is collected locally; when it came to designing the bags, I thought that as one normally slept with three or four blankets above and only one blanket and a sheet below, I would follow the same proportions and have eiderdown above and only one thickness of blanket below. But of course when one is camping most of the cold comes up from the ground, so we did not have much sleep our first few nights.

Although we saw many birds which were new to us, the scientific results of the expedition were not

important. We slept in a tent, and though we took a basic ration of oatmeal, biscuit, chocolate, sugar and butter, we relied on the country for food in the form of ducks and ptarmigan which we shot with a ·410 gun, fish which we caught in the lakes and rivers, and sea-birds' eggs which we collected along the shore. This Robinson Crusoe way of living has always fascinated me, and I am sure that our appreciation of the beauty of Iceland, as well as our great enjoyment of ordinary life when we again returned to it, was sharpened by the fact that our bodies were worn out by the weights we were carrying and the distances we walked.

After returning from Iceland I decided that I would teach, but I wanted to see a little more of life before settling down as a schoolmaster.

In November 1929, I went out to Davos to ski. I had been to Maloja the year before and had found it a wonderful experience. I think ski-ing is the only sport I could ever have been really good at. I have all the necessary qualifications—a good eye, an excellent sense of balance, great staying power, and enough foolhardiness to take almost any slope straight. After a few months' ski-ing I was able to take part in some of the great international ski races: the Parsenn Derby and the Arlberg Kandahar. I also did a certain amount of ski-ing up on the glaciers as an antidote to the gaiety and excitement of Davos. We used to go up to the high huts with food for a week or two and spend all the daylight

Photograph by R. J. Buxton

NORTH-WEST ICELAND: GUILLEMOTS' EGGS FOR BREAKFAST

Photograph by R. J. Buxton

NORTH-WEST ICELAND: VIEW NEAR CAP NORD

hours on skis. On places where there was danger of crevasses we had to ski roped together, and carry ice-axes instead of sticks. This is the most exacting of all kinds of ski-ing. The rope must not be allowed to sag down on to the snow, and each ski-er must be careful not to tug the rope or his companion will lose his balance. Sometimes a frail snow-bridge would collapse as soon as the first ski-er had passed over it; at other times it would be necessary to leap an open crevasse without checking speed.

Among many glacier tours, one, though it was not particulary successful, stays most clearly in my mind. In January 1930, R. H. L. Holdsworth (late Headmaster of Islamia College, Peshawar), M. J. Ingram (one of the Iceland expedition), and I, did a winter ascent of Pitz Kesch from the Porchobello Glacier. This was my first experience of crampons—a framework of metal spikes, generally about two inches in length, which are strapped beneath climbing boots to give a grip on hard ice. It was also my first lead on an important climb. The ascent was difficult, we had to move one at a time, clearing new snow from every hold, and the sun had set behind the distant triple peak of Monte Rosa by the time we reached the summit. We stood on the isolated peak, a head and shoulders higher than any other in the neighbourhood, torn between a desire to stop and stare at the lovely scene and a haunting fear that we were already too late to reach the Kesch Hut in safety. When we returned to our skis the sealskins had frozen on—we had

foolishly omitted to remove them while they were still soft, and it took us some time to get them off. By the time we had started ski-ing it was moonlight. In spite of wind-swept snow the run down to the Porchobello Hut was a wonderful experience: we felt as though we were floating and had no contact with the earth. When we took our boots off, Holdsworth found that his toes were frost-bitten, probably from the tightness of his crampon-strap or ski-binding, and no amount of rubbing would restore the circulation to one big toe. Next day the weather had broken and though we were able to make our way through the Vallorgia Pass to the Grialetch Hut, we had to abandon our plan of climbing the Pitz Grialetch and the Sarsura. We were forced by bad weather to spend two days in the hut. I remember Ingram smoked *brissagos* (rank cigars wound round a straw which has to be pulled out before they will draw) until the whites of his eyes went yellow, and I read *The Prelude* aloud and was very much hurt when Holdsworth went to sleep in the middle. When the weather cleared, a search-party of Davos guides arrived at the hut, and to our great surprise we discovered they were searching for us, having been sent by Ingram's family, who had become anxious for our safety. We were furious, because we had arranged beforehand that we would stay in the hut if it snowed. To cause people the trouble of sending a search-party is the greatest shame a mountaineer can suffer.

A climbing misadventure which I had at Davos must be told, though it is much to my discredit. In the middle of the big park at Davos Platz there is a large copper statue of a naked man with outstretched arms. One morning the inhabitants awoke to find the statue had been painted scarlet from head to toe. Actually I had done this only because somebody had dared a friend of mine to do it and he did not possess the necessary climbing skill—it was a very large statue on a high pedestal—but the officials took a very serious view, suspecting either an anti-nudist demonstration or some deep political plot, and the son of the man who was depicted in the statue came at full speed from Berlin to challenge the artist to a duel. I knew nothing of all this, and when a friend criticised the colour-scheme of my handiwork I went out again the next night and painted the statue white. Just as I was putting the finishing touches to the legs I heard the rattle of a police-dog's chain and saw several dark figures stealthily closing in on the statue. I made a run for it, was captured, escaped again, and after being hit on the head with a truncheon recovered consciousness in the municipal prison. It was a gloomy prospect: I think I was in the condemned cell, for there was a crude charcoal drawing on the wall of a man hanging from a gibbet, and beneath it, in German, which I was just able to translate, the words, "Only God can help you now". The officials took an even more gloomy view of the incident than

they had on the first day, and I think I should be in prison still had not somebody murmured the words "Student's Rag" at the trial. From that moment all went well from my point of view; here was an explanation which they understood, and I was let off with a fine of £30 and costs—which might have been a very large sum, for the statue might have had to be sent to Berlin to be cleaned and re-processed. Doctor H., an English resident at Davos, came to my rescue with a cheque, the result of a collection among sympathetic friends, which was more luck than I deserved.

One day at the end of March, I was ski-ing home to my 'hotel' (I stayed at the Station Inn, a house much frequented by the sledge-drivers as the best food in Davos was obtainable there) when I met Gino Watkins. I had known him at Cambridge after he had returned from his Spitsbergen expedition, which he had led and organised at the age of 19. Since then he had wintered in Labrador with J. M. Scott.

"Hullo, Gino," I said. "How's Labrador?"

"Hullo, Freddy," he answered. "How's Iceland? What are you doing here? Come to Greenland?"

"Right you are," said I. "Why?"

"Well, I must get back to dinner now. Meet me tomorrow and I'll tell you all about it."

And so I found myself suddenly attached as ski expert and naturalist to the British Arctic Air-Route Expedition 1930-31. The story of that, and

SLEDGING LOADS UP A FROZEN STREAM

of the Pan-American Arctic Air-Route Expedition 1932-33, I have told elsewhere.[1]

Life in Greenland was remarkably satisfactory. Our actual job was to investigate the possibilities of an air-route from Europe to America, utilising the natural land-bridges across the Arctic, from London over the north of Scotland and the Faroe Islands to Iceland, across the grim ice-cap of Greenland to Baffin Land, and thence down the far side of Hudson Bay to Winnipeg, thus avoiding any sea-crossing of more than three hundred miles. The only unexplored part of this route was the district around Angmagssalik on the ice-bound east coast of Greenland, and here fourteen of us—pilots and a mechanic for the two Gipsy Moth aeroplanes, surveyors, a geologist, a meteorologist, a wireless expert, and a doctor—were spending rather more than a year. In 1932, four of the original party went out to spend another year at a more suitable air base some miles further north.

I do not think that any part of my life has been or could be happier than those years in Greenland. We were a group of young men with more or less kindred interests and all intent on the same object. The work of mapping and flying over unknown country was inspiring, and the mere struggle to keep alive in the Arctic absorbed all one's spare energy, enthusiasm and inventive powers. Instincts inherent in man but dormant through long years of

[1] *Northern Lights, Watkins' Last Expedition*, etc.

'civilisation' were called into play. I experienced cold so intense that at one time or another I lost all my finger- and toe-nails from frostbite, and my breath froze into solid ice on my face. During the long winter journeys on the ice-cap I was sometimes so exhausted that I fell asleep as I walked along, and once, owing to the rough sea making landing impossible, I spent twenty hours in my kayak. I have been so hungry that I have eaten seal-skin boots and raw blubber. Sometimes we would be confined to our tents for four successive days by a raging blizzard. More than once I fell through a deep crevasse and only saved myself by catching hold of the handle-bars of the sledge, and once, far from land, the sea-ice broke beneath my dogs and sledge-runners, and only by driving on at full speed did I prevent the whole outfit from going through the ice. On another occasion two of us were camping out on the sea-ice when a violent storm arose and the ice started to break up and float out to sea. A crack, through which we could see the surging water, appeared right across the tent, and next morning when the storm had abated we found that the ice had broken up on three sides of us and we were only connected to the shore by a narrow strip.

We learnt much from the Eskimos, a most delightful race. A family of twenty or thirty could live together for a whole winter in a single room without an angry word being said, and in time of famine or misfortune they showed a degree

NINE MEMBERS OF THE B.A.A.R.E. IN THEIR KAYAKS IN EAST GREENLAND.
L. *to* R.: RYMILL, RILEY, COURTAULD, WATKINS, COZENS, CHAPMAN, HAMPTON, BINGHAM, LEMON

of fortitude and unselfishness which astonished us.

There was little actual climbing on these expeditions, but I learnt a great deal of expedition craft and was able to experiment with polar equipment and technique. I also learnt much about ice and snow. And I made another discovery, which is this: almost all difficulties can be overcome. Mere cold is a friend, not an enemy; the weather always gets better if you wait long enough; distance is merely relative; man can exist for a long time on very little food; the human body is capable of immense privation; miracles still happen: it is the state of mind that is important. To Gino Watkins the word 'impossible' simply did not exist. Lesser or greater risks might have to be taken, infinite patience might be necessary, but if the will was sufficient success would come at last. Even the versatile and resourceful Nansen had said that it was impossible for Europeans to learn to roll the kayak and to harpoon seals from it; Watkins said, "Well, if the Eskimos can do it, we can too". So we had kayaks built, and most of us learnt how to roll them. In August 1932, Gino Watkins, at the age of 25, was drowned at Lake Fjord while hunting in his kayak. With him went not only a very great friend and leader, but many exciting plans for the future both in the Arctic and Antarctic.

In the year between the two Greenland Expeditions I was very busy lecturing and writing to help

to pay off the expedition debt, but I found time to go in for the Fell Record, a thing I had long wanted to do. It is held by the man who walks or runs up the greatest number of Lake District peaks in 24 hours. Dr. Arthur Wakefield, of Everest fame, originated it in 1911; he set out from Keswick at midnight, climbed Skiddaw, Helvellyn and Scafell, and returned to his starting place within the 24 hours. Dr. Wakefield was a Sedbergian, and had been paced over part of his route by Bobby Woodhouse, a Sedbergh master. They were both very anxious that a Sedbergian should recapture the record which was then in the hands of Mr. Eustace Thomas who had added many peaks to the original three, but Woodhouse had made me promise not to attempt it until I was over 25. I stayed for some time in Borrowdale as a long period of training is necessary before making such a sustained effort. Then I went to stay with Dr. Wakefield at Keswick, where I spent the mornings working on a book about Greenland and the afternoons and week-ends on the fells. On May 17th I was ready to try. It would have been better to have waited for the longer days and more settled weather, but I had to get back to London and had already left it as late as possible.

As is customary, I had arranged for pacers, who would have provisions ready and would at the same time act as witnesses, to meet me at certain places. May 17th was a dull day with mist on the hill tops. I left Keswick market-place at midnight. The

course I had worked out led along the road to Portinscale and then along the far side of Derwentwater to Newlands, then up Robinson, across to Hindscarth and over Dale Head to the top of Honister Pass. There was thick mist on the tops but I knew the ground well. However, on the way down Dale Head I was running beside the remains of the fence when I was suddenly aware of a darker shadow in the swirling mist at my feet. I was just in time to stop on the edge of a gaping chasm where the slate quarry had encroached upon the fell.

My route then led over Brandreth and Green Gable to the top of Great Gable where I found my next pace-maker awaiting me. As I was running down the far side of Gable to Kirk Fell my compass fell out of my pocket and broke among the rocks. Crossing the top of Black Sail pass I reached Looking Stead, then passed the summits of Pillar, Steeple, Red Pike and so down to Yewbarrow, whence a pleasant run down the screes brought me at 8 o'clock to Wastdale Head for breakfast. At 8.30 I left Wastdale and made my way to the top of Scafell. Then Broad Stand—the only piece of real rock-climbing on the route—had to be negotiated on the way to Scafell Pike. Between Scafell Pike and Great End I lost my way in the mist and having broken my compass was forced to descend below the mist to discover my whereabouts. I found I was in the head of Eskdale, so I climbed back to the summit of Greatend and thence by Esk Hause

to the top of Bow Fell, where I found Bob Graham, the present holder of the record, awaiting me with hot cocoa. From here we cut across by Hanging Knott to the Langdale Pikes, each of which was climbed in turn, then High White Stones and Sergeant Man. Our route now lay along the top of Steel Fell to Dunmail Raise. Unfortunately, we again lost our way in the mist and wasted a good half-hour.

After a half-hour rest for lunch at the top of Dunmail Raise I went up Seat Sandal to Fairfield, then back over Grisedale and along the top of Dollywaggon to Helvellyn, where I found Dr. Wakefield with hot coffee, and over Stybarrow Dod, Great Dod, Clough Head and down to Threlkeld for tea. After half an hour there my pacer and I climbed up the long ridge of Saddleback and across to Great Calva. It was dark by now and raining hard. I was almost an hour behind time, and the man who should have been on the top of Great Calva with hot coffee had given me up and gone home; this was very disheartening as it was then only just possible to get back to Keswick by midnight.

The long climb up Skiddaw seemed interminable. On the way down we tried to take a short cut to Keswick and became involved in some sort of a quarry which was so steep that we had to let ourselves down by holding on to heather and bracken. It was 1 o'clock by the time we reached Keswick

market-place. I had taken 25 hours, so it was a failure so far as the record was concerned, but I mean to try it again one day. George Abraham, the famous mountaineer who lives at Keswick, estimates the route as 130 miles of walking and 30,000 feet of climbing—that is even if you don't get lost in the mist. I was not in the least tired until I reached Threlkeld, but the toil up Saddleback was exhausting and the final climb up Skiddaw almost a nightmare.

In 1934, I went up to the West Coast of Greenland to buy 70 huskies for John Rymill to take to the Antarctic on the British Graham Land Expedition. I longed to go with him, but I felt it was time to settle down and do some work. If I was going to be a schoolmaster and not an explorer-adventurer it was high time I began.

I could have made a living for a time, and a fairly good one too, by writing and lecturing in between expeditions, but an explorer's is an unsettled, unsatisfactory existence as a permanent prospect. To keep up my earnings I should have had to depend on publicity and stunts of one sort or another, for as the great explorer Stefansson once said, the story of a successful expedition makes dull reading, for there should be no adventures. I had followed carefully the careers of men who had been with Scott and Shackleton and on other expeditions, and I found that most of those who had kept it up too long had come to grief in one way or another. The

only people who made a success of it were those whose jobs forced them to return to normal life as soon as the expedition was over—the scientists and men from the Services. Expedition life, if you are suited to it, takes such a hold of you that it makes all other occupations seem flat and dull in comparison and it is difficult to break away. Yet the break had to be made, so I became a schoolmaster at Aysgarth, a large, old-established private school in the North of England. The routine was irksome at first, but I enjoyed the work very much and made good use of my holidays.

One summer I went to Chamonix with two friends, but we had vile weather and were unable to do any of the major peaks. However, we climbed the Requin, the Tour Noir and the Aiguille d'Argentière, though we were turned back from the Grepon and Mont Blanc. Here I learnt more ice-work, and realised what I had missed by never having had the opportunity of climbing with good Alpine guides. The modern guideless climber is self-reliant and enterprising, but I am sure that on ice he lacks the flawless technique and easy speed of the older school.

In the Easter holidays, 1935, two of us went to Lapland. I wanted to see how travel with reindeer compared with dog-sledging, and to try out various details of polar equipment. We bought a reindeer, which we called Isaac, at Karesuando and drove him on a compass course to Karasjok, a distance of about a hundred and fifty miles. As we did not

FROM THE REQUIN HUT LOOKING OVER THE GÉANT SERRACS TO THE COL DU GÉANT, COL D'ENTRÈVES AND THE TOUR RONDES

take a Lapp guide with us and as reindeer are notoriously intractable we chose one without horns in case it came to a hand-to-hand struggle. Unfortunately, we did not realise that reindeer rely to a certain extent on their horns [1] for digging through the snow to uncover the lichenous moss on which they are able—by some remarkable digestive process—to derive sufficient strength to travel prodigious distances in a single day. The consequence was that we had to spend precious hours digging moss for Isaac's supper when we should have been cooking our pemmican or sleeping. Isaac had large black and exceedingly sharp hooves which were valuable in supporting his weight in deep snow, but with which he could deliver phenomenally hard and vicious kicks in almost every direction at once. He also refused to pull our sledge, unless one of us went in front and pulled not only the sledge but Isaac too. Consequently, when we reached Karasjok we were very glad to sell Isaac to a butcher, in spite of considerable financial loss, and to complete the journey on skis, carrying our gear on our backs. Eventually, after turning back just in time from what proved to be a five-day blizzard on Lake Enari, we came out at Vadsö and returned by boat round the North Cape. This journey showed that it was possible to carry out quite exciting expeditions

[1] Later observation has reluctantly convinced me that the reindeer relies solely on its hooves for digging through the snow. But I cannot spoil a good story.

even during the normal school holidays and I planned to take some of the boys another time, to give them a glimpse of the joy of an expedition before they settled down to modern life in cities.

After I had been at Aysgarth for two years, I accepted an invitation from Marco Pallis to take a term off and to join an expedition he was planning to the Himalaya. The object of the expedition was to visit the Zemu Glacier in the Kangchenjunga district of Northern Sikkim, and from there to attempt Simvu (22,360 feet) or Siniolchu (22,620 feet), and possibly other peaks if time and weather permitted.

ISAAC "PULLING" OUR SLEDGE

CAMP NEAR KAUTOKEINO, LAPLAND

CHAPTER THREE

From Liverpool to the Himalaya

MARCO PALLIS is a very remarkable man. His father was a Greek who translated the Odyssey and the Bible into modern Greek. Later he became a British subject and settled at Liverpool. Pallis is a lover of all forms of art; for some years he has been working on an opera, composing the music, writing the words and designing the costumes; he is particularly interested in the viol and harpsichord and has studied under Dr. Dolmetsch at Hazelmere, where both he and Richard Nicholson, another member of the expedition, frequently play. Another of his interests is Tibetan art and philosophy; he finds himself closely in sympathy with the mysticism of the East, and has a very considerable knowledge of the Tibetan language. He did not take up mountaineering until he was over 30, and then, after several seasons in the Alps, he led an expedition to explore the Gangotri district of the Himalaya. T. E. Hicks and Charles Warren, who have been mentioned before in this book, were members of that expedition, so also was R. C. Nicholson, who came again this time.

Nicholson, a son of C. E. Nicholson, the famous yacht-designer, had deserted office life in order to

devote himself to music, and he and Pallis, having so many tastes in common, were inseparable. R. C. Roaf, the doctor of the expedition, was a son of the eminent professor of physiology at Liverpool. His experience of mountaineering was small, but he was extremely interested in Tibetan art and had already a fair knowledge of the language. J. K. Cooke, the fifth member of the expedition, worked in an insurance office in Liverpool. He used to escape to Snowdon during week-ends, and having had a season or two in the Alps, he had made a name for himself as a very skilful and daring rock-climber. The plans were that after we had all climbed for a month on the Zemu Glacier, Pallis, Nicholson and Roaf would, if permission could be secured, enter Tibet, while Cooke and I continued to climb in Sikkim.

The expedition was fortunate in being allowed to travel for a nominal sum in the Harrison Line cargo boat *Recorder*, which sailed from Brunswick Dock, Liverpool, on February 22nd, 1936. As we left the foggy Mersey behind us after the usual crowded last week of preparation I found it difficult to believe that I was really setting out for the Himalaya, the highest peaks in the world, the ultimate but rarely-found goal of all mountaineers. I was not on my way to attempt Everest, but this, I hoped, might be a preparation for such an expedition in the future.

The voyage was uneventful, but as it was my first journey to the East, it was full of interest for me.

The Captain did not like passengers and did not disguise the fact. He was a keen golfer and used to practise his drive on the lower deck with a captive golf ball. Unfortunately its captivity was uncertain and balls whistling about the ship added to the excitement of an otherwise uneventful trip. We used to keep fit by playing with a heavy medicine ball until it and all available substitutes had been hurled overboard by over-enthusiastic players. Entering the Mediterranean we saw to the south the snow-capped peaks of the Atlas Mountains and to the north the sunset glow on the Sierra Nevada. At Port Said, when we had to remove all brass fittings from the boat to prevent their being stolen, a wonderful collection of leering pock-marked rogues came on board to try and sell us things we did not want. The best turn was a man who described himself as an "A1 Barber"; his game was to come up behind someone with a pair of scissors and pretend to trim off a projecting tuft of hair and then quickly snip a furrow right up the back of the victim's hair, so that he was forced to have it cut. The redeeming features of Port Said were a row of exquisitely graceful fishing-boats lying at anchor, and the wonderful magenta-coloured blooms of the Bougainvillæa growing on the houses.

The Canal is cut straight through the desert with banks of sand up to 15 feet high on either side and is edged by concrete walls with frequent mooring-blocks in case ships have to pass. The best position

devote himself to music, and he and Pallis, having so many tastes in common, were inseparable. R. C. Roaf, the doctor of the expedition, was a son of the eminent professor of physiology at Liverpool. His experience of mountaineering was small, but he was extremely interested in Tibetan art and had already a fair knowledge of the language. J. K. Cooke, the fifth member of the expedition, worked in an insurance office in Liverpool. He used to escape to Snowdon during week-ends, and having had a season or two in the Alps, he had made a name for himself as a very skilful and daring rock-climber. The plans were that after we had all climbed for a month on the Zemu Glacier, Pallis, Nicholson and Roaf would, if permission could be secured, enter Tibet, while Cooke and I continued to climb in Sikkim.

The expedition was fortunate in being allowed to travel for a nominal sum in the Harrison Line cargo boat *Recorder*, which sailed from Brunswick Dock, Liverpool, on February 22nd, 1936. As we left the foggy Mersey behind us after the usual crowded last week of preparation I found it difficult to believe that I was really setting out for the Himalaya, the highest peaks in the world, the ultimate but rarely-found goal of all mountaineers. I was not on my way to attempt Everest, but this, I hoped, might be a preparation for such an expedition in the future.

The voyage was uneventful, but as it was my first journey to the East, it was full of interest for me.

The Captain did not like passengers and did not disguise the fact. He was a keen golfer and used to practise his drive on the lower deck with a captive golf ball. Unfortunately its captivity was uncertain and balls whistling about the ship added to the excitement of an otherwise uneventful trip. We used to keep fit by playing with a heavy medicine ball until it and all available substitutes had been hurled overboard by over-enthusiastic players. Entering the Mediterranean we saw to the south the snow-capped peaks of the Atlas Mountains and to the north the sunset glow on the Sierra Nevada. At Port Said, when we had to remove all brass fittings from the boat to prevent their being stolen, a wonderful collection of leering pock-marked rogues came on board to try and sell us things we did not want. The best turn was a man who described himself as an "A1 Barber"; his game was to come up behind someone with a pair of scissors and pretend to trim off a projecting tuft of hair and then quickly snip a furrow right up the back of the victim's hair, so that he was forced to have it cut. The redeeming features of Port Said were a row of exquisitely graceful fishing-boats lying at anchor, and the wonderful magenta-coloured blooms of the Bougainvillæa growing on the houses.

The Canal is cut straight through the desert with banks of sand up to 15 feet high on either side and is edged by concrete walls with frequent mooring-blocks in case ships have to pass. The best position

is behind mail-boats or oil-tankers as these—the latter being explosive—are hurried through as quickly as possible. We were unlucky though, and once had to tie up while eight ships passed us—two empty Italian troop-ships returning from Abyssinia, a Swedish timber boat from Göteborg, a French tramp, a large Japanese cargo-boat from Kobe, a wheat-boat from Latvia, a Dutchman from Rotterdam and a Brocklebank Line boat from Liverpool. Soon we passed the war memorial near where the Turks attacked in the last war, and by the time we had crossed the Great Bitter Lake and seen the remains of the ancient canal of the Pharaohs it was time to turn on the enormous searchlight which had been fitted to our bows at Port Said. After passing the Land of Goschen, where Jacob was sent by Joseph, we saw the line of lights which marked Suez, having tarversed the 87½ miles of the canal in just over twelve hours.

Going down the Red Sea we admired the magnificent rows of jagged mountains in the distance on each side; bleak and barren they looked, except when they were softened by the misty early morning sunlight. We saw no sign of Mount Sinai. There was never a patch of grass visible, not a leaf, not even a lichen, moss, or cactus. Nevertheless there was plenty of colour; bands of pale sulphur, ochre and chocolate zigzagged across the arid ridges. A dove with exquisite lilac-blue wings settled on the ship; then a kestrel and a short-eared owl. A flight

of several hundred kites passed overhead, flying northwards. It was here that I saw flying fish for the first time and thought them most beautiful. The water was an oily blue colour, except where it reflected the terra-cotta tints of the mountains. Suddenly there emerged what appeared to be a dragon-fly, but with black and oval body, though sometimes the scales appeared to be of silver and the wings shone with rainbow lights. It flew fast with its gossamer wings vibrating, a thin double line of disturbance following it in the water until it rose clear. It did not fly more than a few feet above the water and every now and then it came low enough to touch the surface with its body, setting off again after each contact with renewed vigour like an electric toy which has to stop and recharge itself. The end of the flight was disappointing: it fell back with a heavy splash, leaving only a few ripple-rings. Nearly every evening Pallis and Nicholson played their viols. I shall always connect the tune *Greensleeves* with the diaphanous wings of flying fish, and the unreal stage-scenery-like mountains of the Red Sea.

On March 16th we were off Minacoy, a small coral island between the Maldive and Laccadive Islands and the only land we saw between Perim and Ceylon. We were south of the north-east monsoon by then and it grew unpleasantly hot. Two days later we passed the south coast of Ceylon and saw the graceful catamarans (outrigger canoes)

coming in from fishing. They are so light and stream-lined they seem to leap from crest to crest of the waves, a strong contrast to a large turtle which we saw swimming cumbrously alongside. Ceylon looked enchanting with its strip of golden sand and low palm-covered shore-line, and in the distance all varieties and shapes of deep blue hills, some ending in rock monoliths like buildings, others with their heads lost in heavy cumulus cloud.

On March 21st, after a voyage of four weeks, we landed at Vizagapatam, the new port two hundred miles south of Madras. The shore-line was not unlike Brighton beach and almost as crowded. Beyond the sand, where fishing-boats were hauled up, was a line of modern concrete villas and then low hills clothed with palm-trees and a few mosques and temples on the hill-tops. We anchored at sunset and a pilot took us into the harbour up an attractive creek where I saw several grey kingfishers, many bee-eaters, a flock of white parrots, some cinnamon-coloured Brahminy kites and other new birds.

In the cool of the evening we set out for a walk, following a windy road lined with tamarisk, mimosa and acacia trees. First we passed some primitive native dwellings, mere booths of thatched palm with fairy lights inside. Outside them were goats and queer oxen with humps on their shoulders, hanging dewlaps and tucked-back ears. The shops were curious cupboard-like contrivances; they sold brass-ware, spices, sweets, curries and cereals and

bottles of brightly coloured fizzy drinks. Huge trees hung over the road and the heavy air was loaded with their strong perfume. Crowds of dark-skinned people passed to and fro clad in gay loosely-hanging garments; there were many bicycles and occasionally a motor-car hooted its way through the press. Then a line of slow bullock-waggons would emerge from a side-street with a naked boy-driver standing importantly between two of the animals. A few mangy little ponies pulled dog-carts and 'cabs', evil-looking boxes on wheels, into which their drivers tried to tempt us.

Standing back from the line of shops was a shrine of some sort, exquisitely coloured, and further along an opening into a cool garden, shaded by clumps of coconut palms and banyan trees. The wall was plastered with dung cakes drying for fuel. Cows and goats lay in the streets on the raised steps of the houses and men were sleeping beside them with pieces of brightly coloured cloth draped over their inert brown bodies. Women with straight supple figures went past carrying loads on their heads: an earthenware jar, a bundle of wood, or a round basket of mangoes. Another group with brass pitchers collected, gossiping, round a well. What an overpowering smell there was—of heat in the first place, and human bodies, warm dung, and a sudden heavy breath of flower scent that was like incense, then a nauseating reek of dirt and sour milk, and all the time the noise of cicadas and grass-

hoppers, holding its own against the soft voices of the crowd.

A wizened old man squatted in the dust and harangued a circle of attentive boys; a leper washed his mutilated limbs in the gutter; a thin voice at my elbow set up a wail of "Babu, Babu," and a wrinkled cringing beggar slapped his hollow stomach and followed us, clamouring, for some distance along the road. Hearing strange music, we turned up a side-street which was hung with paper decorations, and watched a group of hooded women in white robes come out of a house and cross the road; then a man appeared and asked us not to come any further, so we had to leave it as an unsolved mystery, the culmination of our dream-like walk. We checked our direction by the Pole Star—low on the horizon in these latitudes—and followed Canopus, winding our way through narrow mud-walled streets, and at last reached the shore, where the fresh salt air broke the spell and we realised that it was late and time to go to bed.

Next day we heard that owing to a bore that was expected in the Hooghli river our ship would have to wait for several days at Vizagapatam. Pallis and Roaf went on by train to Calcutta and thence to Kalimpong to make preparations for our transport, leaving the rest of us to follow with the *Recorder*. That night Cooke and I joined a party in the mate's cabin. We drank whisky and the mate strummed his banjo, with sweat pouring off his round red face,

and sang nautical—some of them very nautical—songs. What a strange race merchant-seamen are! They seem to have no interest in the places they visit. Very often they don't even bother to go ashore, and when they do it is usually only for a debauch. "Oh! do you know Bahia Blanca?" says one. "Yes," answers another, "I was there in '32. Do you know the —— Bar?"

As we had a couple of days to fill in, we decided to go up by train to Salur at the foot of the Eastern Ghats. The train left at dawn and took us through some interesting country with paddy-birds and white egrets feeding beside sluggish streams. As we went inland coconut palms gave way to thatching and date palms. Cultivation increased; there were groves of huge-leaved banana trees, plantations of tobacco and betel-nut and fields of oil-seed and millet. All the square paddy-fields were surrounded by mud walls a foot high to hold the monsoon rains of July and August for the rice crop. Water is brought up from the river by means of a pole attached to a bucket and laid across a forked tree; one native walks up and down the pole so that the bucket alternately dips into the river and is lifted into the air; when it is in the latter position, a second native empties it into a cut at a higher level. The fields are worked with primitive hoes and the ploughs pulled by oxen. In clusters of trees are lovely mud-walled native houses thatched with palm leaves. When we stopped to change at a station, we heard the copper-

smith bird calling in the pepill trees, and saw sacred monkeys come down and walk among the passengers. Iridescent king crows and blue jays sat on the telegraph wires and vultures and kites circled overhead.

At Salur we watched them treading out the millet with oxen. One man walked two bullocks round and round a small patch of ground about ten feet square, while another swept the grain in towards the centre. In the river they were washing clothes, standing knee-deep in the water and continually beating the wet garments on flat stones propped up at an angle of 45 degrees in the water, hissing all the time like grooms and ejaculating 'tsay' at each smack.

In the market-place, the flies were a tribulation, beggars whined on all sides and the heat was almost unbearable. At last our car arrived, a rickety old Ford bus with no windows, and we set off for the top of the Ghats, some twenty miles distant. We sped along the dustiest road I have ever seen, with our horn blowing all the time to stir the slow-moving bullock-carts and lines of women carrying loads on their heads. We passed a leper colony and the road started to wind upwards with frequent hairpin bends and embankments. On each side were huge pyramidical peaks of volcanic rock; the largest had a lovely temple on the summit. In some places the slope was so steep that it was difficult to understand how the earth and trees clung on. This was the

real jungle. As far as eye could reach, on either side of the road the forest stretched away into the distance. Down below, an impenetrable undergrowth of prickly shrubs, many with exquisite flowers, prevented all progress and surely hid all manner of wild beasts. Here and there taller trees reared their heads above the general level. The most spectacular, called Flame of the Forest, had no leaves on the smooth grey branches, but at the top it broke into a mass of crimson heads like sunflowers. On the way back we encountered a dust-storm and had to stop for a few minutes as it was impossible to see across the road. Then it rained as it can rain only in the tropics, and from the train on the return journey we saw that all the paddy-fields were squares of silver in the moonlight.

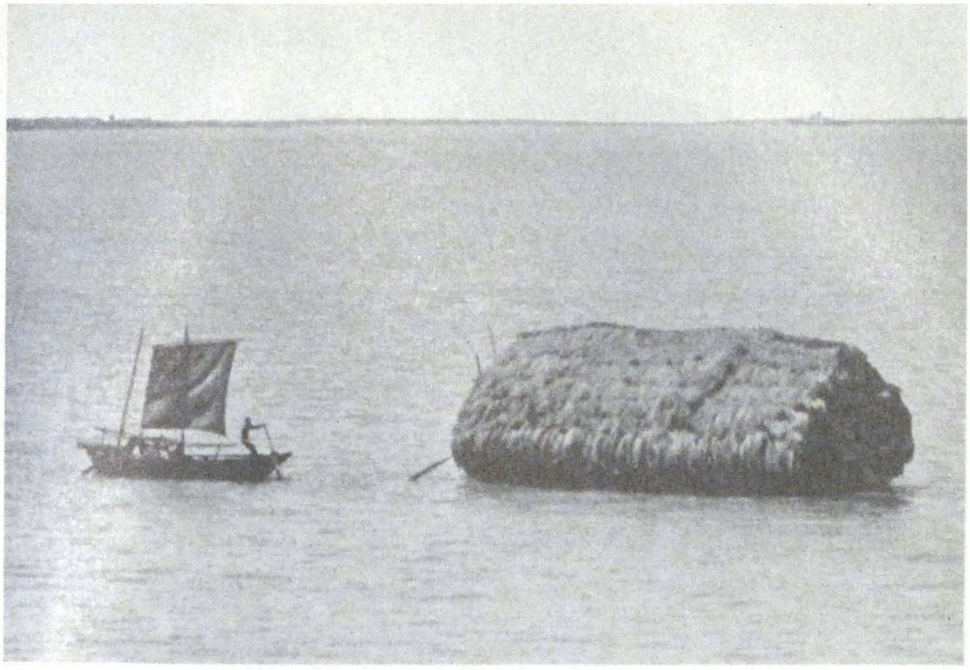
The next day we sailed for Calcutta, which is very like an English city except for its cosmopolitan Eastern crowds and certain peculiarities which strike a stranger, such as pavements red with betel-nut spat out by addicts, and the sacred bulls which wander through the streets holding up the traffic, eating from the vegetable stalls, or sleeping on the pavements. The temperature was 104° in the shade and we felt as if we had been left all night in a Turkish bath.

On March 27 we left by train for Siliguri. The train travelled all night across the plain of Bengal, through paddy-fields, mud-walled villages and groves of palms, bamboos and bananas. At first

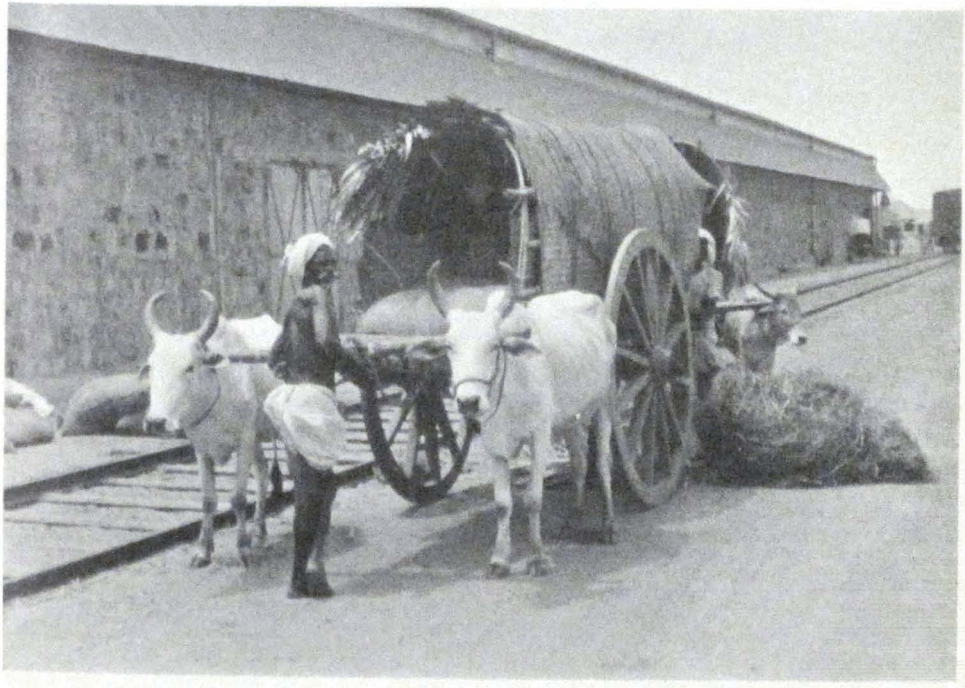
sight Siliguri seemed to be a typical village of the Plains, but among the crowd in the squalid fly-infested bazaar there were a few hill-men, recognisable by their oblique eyes and high cheek-bones and their cheerful, independent manners. And already in the background could be seen the steep tree-covered foothills of the Himalaya.

We hired two open cars and set off for Kalimpong, a small town at 8000 feet, forty miles further north, on the border of Bengal, Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan. For the first seven or eight miles the road led straight through a level stretch of tropical forest known as the Terai; then, accompanied by the narrow-gauge railway which runs from Siliguri to Darjeeling, it entered the Teesta gorge, where it followed the river between beetling cliffs which rose extremely steeply on either side. Once again I found myself marvelling how the trees and undergrowth could cling to rock at such a precipitous angle. About thirty miles from Siliguri we crossed the Teesta river by a modern concrete bridge hung with prayer flags by pious Buddhists. From Teesta Bridge the road soon took to the hills and after nine miles of twisting and turning through the forest we were at Kalimpong. In one place the road actually doubled over itself as railways do in Switzerland.

Kalimpong is a fair-sized village straggling along a saddle between two thickly-wooded hills. As the climate is good there are many Europeans here, the most eminent being the Very Reverend Doctor



SHIPPING HAY ACROSS THE HOOGHLI



BULLOCK CART AT VIZAGAPATAM

Graham, who came to Kalimpong some fifty years ago. He and his wife built up the excellent Kalimpong Homes for unwanted or poverty-stricken half-caste children. Dr. Graham's son-in-law, Norman Odling, is another well-known figure. He is in charge of the wool trade with Tibet, and with the help of his charming wife he runs the Kalimpong Arts and Crafts to encourage local industry. The Himalayan Hotel where we stayed at Kalimpong is managed by David Macdonald, who has lived longer in Tibet than any other English-speaking man. The son of a Scottish father and a Sikkimese mother, and married to a Nepali, he was for twenty years British Trade Agent at Gyantse, on the main trade route to Lhasa, which also he had frequently visited. He is an old man now, and has unfortunately become rather deaf. The hotel is looked after by one of his many daughters, who is married to an Englishman called Perry who was once attached to the escort at Gyantse.

It is difficult for me to describe Kalimpong, a place where I later spent many happy days as a guest of the Odlings. In my mind it is a confusion of disconnected but vivid pictures. The clearest, perhaps, is of the Odlings' bungalow, which is furnished like an English country-house, with the addition of rare Tibetan curios. The walls are hung with rich *thankas*—paintings of Buddhist deities framed in scrolls of rich brocade and hung from rollers. These are usually found in Tibetan

monasteries and some of them are very valuable. They have also a very fine collection of Tibetan metalwork, twelve-foot-long monastery trumpets, silver prayer-wheels inlaid with turquoise, exquisite copper and brass teapots of curious design, and a number of jewelled charm-boxes. In their garden, all the ordinary English summer flowers were in bloom as well as plants which will not grow out of doors at home. On a clear day there was a wonderful view from it. The red and grey roofs of Kalimpong village showed through the tree-tops on its saddle-back ridge, and beyond that the land fell sharply, one wooded ridge after another, to the malaria-infested Teesta gorge. In some places the forest had been cleared and wrinkled paddy-fields had been laboriously carved from the steep hillsides. On the other side of the valley, clearings in the forest showed the site of the Darjeeling tea-gardens with trim lines of bushes surrounding the factory buildings. Ridge behind ridge paled into the distance, and beyond, poised high in the air as though in another world, were the eternal snows of the Himalaya. The first sight of these mountains was an unforgettable experience to one who had dreamed of them and read of them for years. Dominating the range was the solid mass of Kangchenjunga, a complete range of mountains in itself, shining with dazzling whiteness above the hazy valleys, and grouped around it were the more delicate peaks of many other mountains, including

Simvu and the fearful pinnacle of Siniolchu with a great ridge running to the south.

The cosmopolitan market of Kalimpong is another vivid memory. The usual dark-skinned Hindus sat cross-legged in their shops; but up here they looked out of place; they were attenuated by malaria and the whites of their eyes were a sickly yellow. There were also sallow Chinamen dressed in long quilted robes, perhaps the remnants of the routed Chinese army which fled this way from Lhasa in 1911; lithe hustling Nepalis with small black embroidered fezes; timid-looking, pale-skinned Lepchas, the original inhabitants of the forest; independent and villainous-looking Tibetan muleteers with huge turquoise and gold ear-rings, pigtails tied round their heads, and whip-handles stuck into their girdles; short-haired Bhutanese, with striped homespun robes and bare knees; and always crowds of silent Nepali and Lepcha women hurrying past with huge baskets for carrying stones attached to their foreheads.

Pallis and Roaf had been over to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, to see the Political Officer at the Residency, and now, owing to the infected dust of the highway, they were both suffering from inflamed throats. Their report was none too promising. Mr. Gould, the Political Officer, who is responsible for our dealings with the native states of Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan, seemed to think there was little chance of any of the party being allowed

into Tibet and he even discouraged the climbing part of our programme. Apparently the Kangchenjunga district is extremely holy to Buddhists and the Maharajah of Sikkim did not want us to go; it was possible that we should be allowed to attempt some minor peaks, but neither Simvu nor Siniolchu comes under this category. Pallis was very depressed and retired to bed with a high temperature.

Ishwar Singh and Jun Singh, two Garwalis who had been with Pallis and Nicholson in 1936, joined us here. Ishwar Singh was to be the sirdah in charge of the porters, while Jun was to do the cooking.

On March 30th, Nicholson, Ishwar Singh and I went over to Darjeeling to choose the twenty porters whom we needed to carry our gear up the Zemu Glacier. Among these would be some of the famous Sherpas who come down to Darjeeling in the early summer to look for expedition work. They are men of Tibetan stock who inhabit Sola Khombu, a high valley of Nepal. In the winter time they are industrious farmers and in the summer they attach themselves to climbing expeditions, partly for the wages they earn, but chiefly for love of the job. In the last thirty years they have built up a splendid tradition of trustworthiness and fortitude and many of them are very skilful mountaineers. The Himalayan Club, with a local secretary at Darjeeling, has all the information about them carefully filed and docketed. Each porter carries a passport with a photograph of himself, his signature in the form of

an impression of his thumb, and all particulars of his career as a porter, the expeditions on which he has served, the height which he reached, and signed comments on his character and ability from the leader of each expedition. All have pink cards with a medical report from a Darjeeling or expedition doctor. They are a cheerful, improvident crowd, many of whom drink or gamble away all their wages as soon as they draw them.

Darjeeling, the centre of the tea-planting district and the summer residence of the Governor of Bengal, is larger and more prosperous-looking than Kalimpong, though it is built on similar steep mountain slopes and has the same squalid bazaar and as great a proportion of corrugated-iron and ramshackle, jerry-built native dwellings.

Outside the house of Mr. Kidd, the local secretary of the Himalayan Club, was a straggling crowd of fifty or sixty of the wildest-looking men I had ever seen. Not many of them were genuine Sherpas; most of them were Tibetans or Bhutias, and one or two were rickshaw wallas from the Darjeeling bazaar. Some had pronounced Mongolian features, others seemed almost negroid with thick lips and curly black hair. Many of them were bare-foot, others wore scarlet and green muleteers' boots, while a few had properly nailed climbing-boots, khaki puttees and Balaclava helmets, perquisites from former expeditions. Some wore their tangled hair hanging unkempt over their shoulders, others had their long

pigtails wrapped round their foreheads and some had tied them round their battered felt-hats. One, who appeared to be a lama of some sort, had short hair and wore a long purple robe. One or two had been on Everest expeditions, or had served with Paul Bauer and the Bavarians on Kangchenjunga; some had no experience at all.

It was a difficult and invidious job to choose the number we wanted from among them; they all seemed so desperately keen to come. We took a few who had obviously had some experience of real climbing; we took the lama; we took the ugliest one, a man with a single enormous tooth in the middle of his mouth; we took the handsomest one, a rickshaw walla, who wore an ear-ring set with a large turquoise in his left ear. Then we made the remainder run up the hill and took those who seemed to be in the best condition. At last we had chosen our twenty. We wrote down their names, the names of their wives and to whom their wages should be paid, their age, nationality and occupations, and finally they had to sign the agreement with a thumb-print. Their wages were to be one rupee per day (1s. 6d.) and a small allowance for food; those who were taken on to the snow would be paid slightly more.

While we were at Darjeeling, Wood Johnson, the Transport Officer of the 1933 Everest Expedition, rang up and asked us to stop and dine at Geille Tea Garden, where he was assistant-manager. To

CHOOSING THE PORTERS—EACH MAN HOLDS HIS CREDENTIALS

"WE MADE THE PORTERS RUN UP AND DOWN THE HILL"

reach his bungalow we followed a narrow road through the forest down a remarkable number of S bends, some of them so acute that we had to reverse to get round them, and, below, the hillside dropped away almost vertically. Only the smallest cars could negotiate the road at all. Soon the rhododendron forest gave way to lines of trim tea-bushes and thickets of graceful olive-coloured bamboos. As soon as it grew dark the air was full of fireflies, a strange owl hooted, and tiny lights twinkled in the coolie lines. A tea garden seemed a most romantic place.

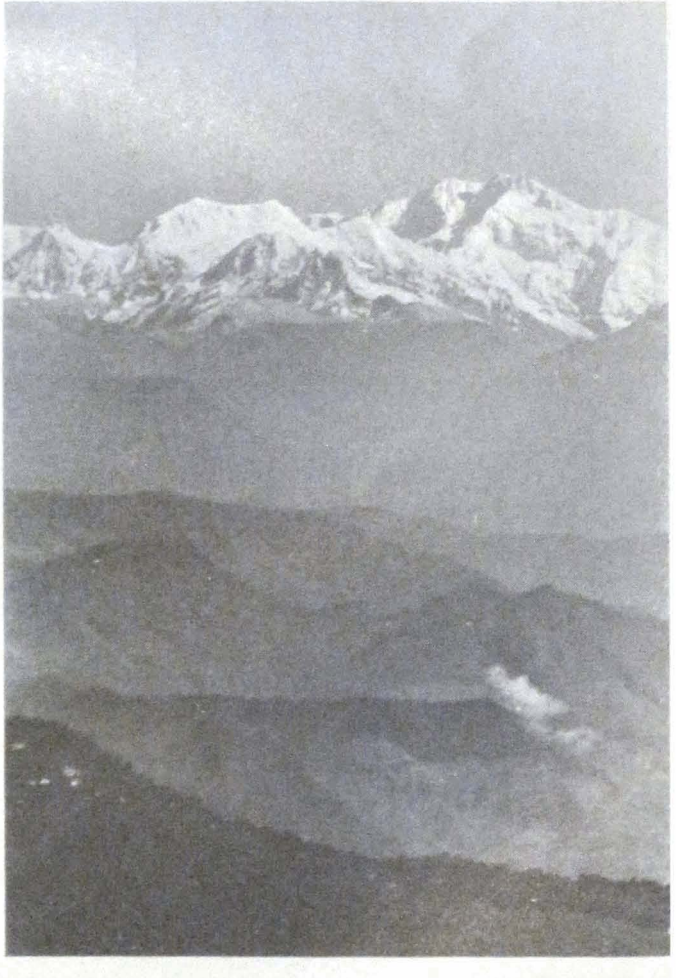
That night we talked Everest till the small hours. Was it essential to go before the monsoon? What was the ideal number for a climbing party? What was the ideal age? Should oxygen be taken? What were the factors which controlled acclimatisation? Wood Johnson told us that some people's characters changed completely at an altitude of above 20,000 feet and that a certain climber had tried to murder another member of the party. He himself had developed duodenal ulcers on the mountain and had almost died before they got him down. This year (1936) they were attempting it again: would the monsoon be kind to them—and to us, who were equally dependent on good weather?

When we returned to Kalimpong we found that Pallis was still laid up, so it was arranged that the rest of us should go over to Gangtok by car as heavy rainstorms had now settled the dust on the

road and conditions were ideal. The road took us down almost to Teesta Bridge and then we turned northwards and followed the river to Rangpo, being stopped at the frontier by native police who examined our passes. Then the road led through dense forest where the trees were festooned with huge ferns, mosses and all manner of creepers. Magenta orchids bloomed in the forks of trees; strange, gaily-coloured birds darted into sight, and clouds of enormous brilliant butterflies rose from wet patches on the road as the car approached. In one place we ran through rubber plantations, in another there were trim orange groves, and down by the river were occasional oases of terraced cultivation where natives could be seen ploughing the dark soil with clumsy water buffaloes. Troops of monkeys squatted beside the road or shook the tree-tops in anger or alarm. Now and then we passed a group of wild, long-haired Red-Indian-like men with trains of mules and donkeys: these were Tibetan muleteers bringing wool down from the highlands of Tibet.

At last, after climbing steeply for several miles, we reached Gangtok, a small town with a busy street of market stalls and a few European-looking houses. At the top of the village was the Dak bungalow, or rest-house, which was in charge of a dirty-looking old man. There was a note for us, inviting Nicholson and myself to go up to the Residency. So we drove on past the bungalow up a trim tarmac drive lit by electric light. Soon we reached a beautiful stone

PICKING TEA IN A DARJEELING TEA GARDEN



SIMVU AND KANGCHENJUNGA FROM DARJEELING

house surrounded by green lawns, gay flower-beds and ornamental ponds. Here I met Mr. B. J. Gould, whom I was destined to see much of in the following years. He was a very tall, soldierly man of about 50, who had been in nearly all the danger spots of the Frontier from Quetta to Bhutan; in 1912 he was British Trade Agent at Gyantse and was a keen student of the Tibetan language; he had only been at Gangtok for a few months, having succeeded Mr. Williamson, who had died suddenly in Lhasa.

We found that the six bullock-carts which were to bring the expedition gear from Siliguri had not yet arrived but the twenty mules that were going to carry it on up to Lachen, fifty miles nearer the Zemu Glacier, were already waiting. The porters, meanwhile, had walked over from Darjeeling and were impatient to start. Some of them had started a riot in the bazaar the previous night.

The expedition plans were not much advanced; apparently Kingdon Ward and Ronald Kaulback had upset the Tibetan authorities, and, as British relations with the Lhasa Government were at that time very ill-defined, it was important that nothing should happen to complicate them further. We were to be allowed to visit the Zemu Glacier, but it seemed improbable that any of us would be allowed to enter Tibet.

On April 7th Pallis came over from Kalimpong. He still looked very ill but was fit enough to start for Lachen on the following day.

CHAPTER FOUR

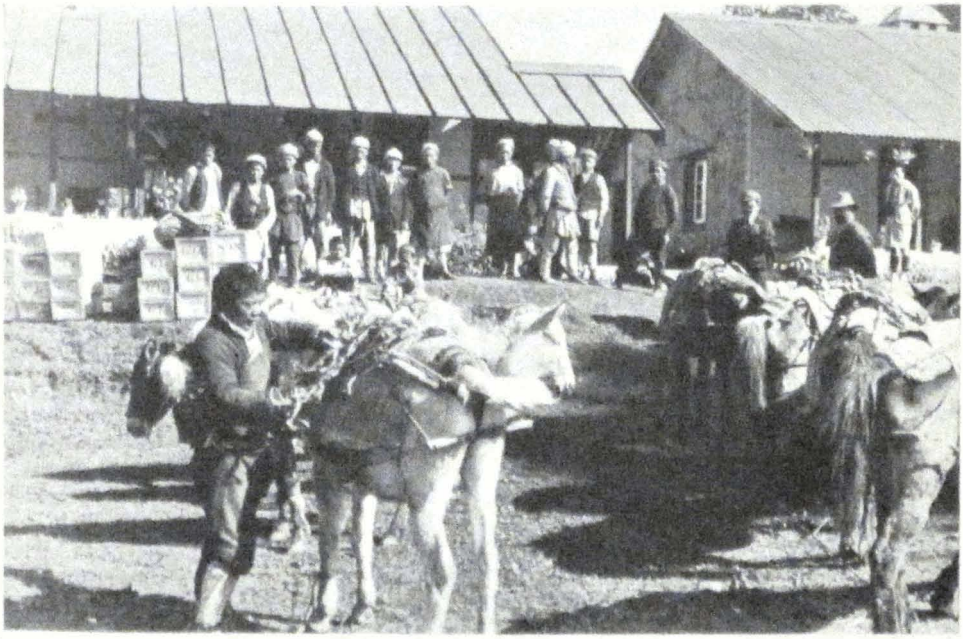
From the Tropical Forest to the Snows

On April 8th—a lovely day—we were up at 6.30 and sorted loads and packed our personal possessions to the sound of strange music, as of bagpipes and trombones, which came up from the monastery. My hold-all contained the following:

Grenfell-cloth wind-proof suit, with fur-edged hood,
Balaclava wool helmet and a thinner wool hat, scarf, putties,
Three pairs ordinary socks,
Three pairs thick wool socks,
One pair stockings,
One pair felt-lined climbing-boots,
Two pairs wool mitts,
One pair wind-proof outer gloves,
Two light wool jerseys,
One heavier sweater,
Two flannel shirts, one cotton shirt,
Two pairs grey flannels,
Two pairs cotton pants,
Six handkerchiefs,
Pyjamas, towel, sleeping-bag cover.

We carried our immediate necessities in our ruck-

SOME OF THE POLITICAL OFFICERS' PONIES AND GROOMS



LOADING THE MULES AT GANGTOK BUNGALOW

sacks; mine contained mostly cameras, also a sleeping-bag, washing-gear and a change of clothes, and weighed 25 lbs. The fourteen mules came at 8.15, a motley collection of weary saddle-sore jades. Each should carry 150 lbs., but as our boxes weighed 50 lbs. each and the loads have to be evenly balanced they only carried 100 lbs. The porters had light loads, so they were happy; they had only about 50 lbs. each, which is half what they really can manage. Each man tied a scarf or other kind of primitive harness under the bottom of the load on his back and then over his forehead and this took all the weight. It is an interesting fact that nearly all the tribes in the world which are noted as weight-carriers support the load on their heads and necks.

We got away at 10. The mules bucked a bit to begin with, but soon settled down; indeed, they were remarkably quiet animals; the men walked all round as they loaded up and none of them tried to bite or kick. It was marvellous to be off at last. The lovely road wound round the hillside, continually crossing streams which poured from the steep forest above. There were quantities of tree ferns and masses of white, yellow and purple orchids. The undergrowth, mostly bamboo, was very thick. On the left were barley fields and meadows, and on the other side of the gorge, a great mountain slope so thickly covered with trees that not a rock was visible. I saw a white-capped redstart; cuckoos were very noisy and also a tiresome bird which

called continually but missed four beats with maddening persistence.

Suddenly the road dived through a cutting and we were at the top of the Penlong La ('La' means a pass) unexpectedly soon. On the way down the other side we passed the porters drinking tea at a wayside bazaar. They seemed to be as glad as we were to be on the move at last. Soon afterwards, although we had only gone nine miles, we camped because we wanted to go right past Dikchu, a notoriously malarial spot, in a single march. There are bungalows every ten or fifteen miles but we avoided them, partly to save expense and also to get used to camping routine. We camped among some terraced paddy-fields, the only clearing we had seen in the dense forest. At the edge of the clearing there were too many leeches, so we put up the tents lower down. The porters cut beds of bracken and stretched tarpaulins above. We had tea and biscuits and jam. Every drop of water had to be boiled. The site of Phodang Monastery was revealed by a line of white prayer flags on the other side of the valleys. I could not persuade any of the others to walk across to it, so I went up into the jungle alone and had a bad time with the leeches; whenever I stopped to pull them off my shoes or clothes, new ones rushed in on me; it is an awful sight to see them standing on end blindly feeling for one's blood. I found a queer tin-roofed monastery with wonderful carving on the door, but I did not

like to go inside. The Buddhism here is of a very primitive type, retaining much of the ancient Pön religion of pure animism; the native Lepchas are very close to the spirits of the forest.

A great deal of barley is grown here. One woman was threshing it with a hand-flail while another sifted the grain in a round tray. There was a fine view of pinnacled ridges, all forested, and the high snow-scattered hills of Tibet beyond. Rain threatened, so we dug dykes round the tent. Nicholson found a leech in his sleeping-bag and we cremated it horribly in the candle.

The next morning we were away by 7. We wandered downhill to Dikchu. Soon the 'motor road' stopped and gave place to a steep, winding, cobbled track. In one place a gang of Nepalis were building a fine stone bridge and many men and women were working on the road. They stared at us and the children said 'salaam' and asked for money. It was terribly hot here and the forest had an overburdening and oppressive effect. Some of the tree-trunks were completely hidden by creepers with huge shiny kidney-shaped leaves; clumps of hound's-tongue fern clung to the sides of trees and grew in their own decaying vegetation, often completely obscuring the trunk. There were long serrated ferns, delicate feathery ones, innumerable kinds of mosses, and all sorts of flowering shrubs which we had not seen before. Brilliantly coloured butterflies hovered over the trees: black velvety

swallow-tails as big as small birds, with curiously shaped underwings spotted with blue, pink or white; lemon-coloured swallow-tails with a network of iridescent green, and others that flashed deep purple as they flew, and orange, peacock-blue and scarlet ones—every colour imaginable—in hundreds at every wet place on the road, where they settle to suck the moisture.

At Dikchu, where three roads meet and there was actually a signpost, there are only a few dirty wooden huts, roofed with corrugated iron; the people looked very sallow and malarial. There is a fine suspension bridge across the Dik Chu ('Chu' is Tibetan for a river), just above its junction with the Teesta; the porters all picked a flower and dropped it into the water with a prayer as they crossed. All day we met natives carrying prodigious weights of grass for pony fodder and bundles of split bamboos for thatching. After the bridge there was a long pull uphill, and the path became very narrow and was paved with rough cobble-stones. In one place we crossed a precarious bamboo causeway built along a vertical rock wall over the foaming Teesta. It swayed with each step. Later we crossed the gorge of a tributary by a suspension bridge, 300 feet long and 300 feet above the river. Most of the people here were sallow-faced Lepchas; they seemed subdued and overpowered by the spirit of the jungle of which they are supposed to know every tree and every plant. They live by growing cardamon seed and

THE TRACK THROUGH THE FOREST

PORTERS CROSSING A TORRENT

a little maize and rice in clearings of the forest, but they are being driven further and further into the jungle by the more enterprising Nepalis, who are excellent business men. At 4 o'clock we reached Mangan, a few squalid tin-roofed huts on a hillside, and as it started to rain we put up our tents. Near by there was a considerable encampment of Tibetan muleteers with canvas tents. I wished I could talk to them. We found several leeches in the tent. Most of the natives we met had bleeding bites all over their bare feet and legs, but it did not seem to worry them; the cattle suffer terribly.

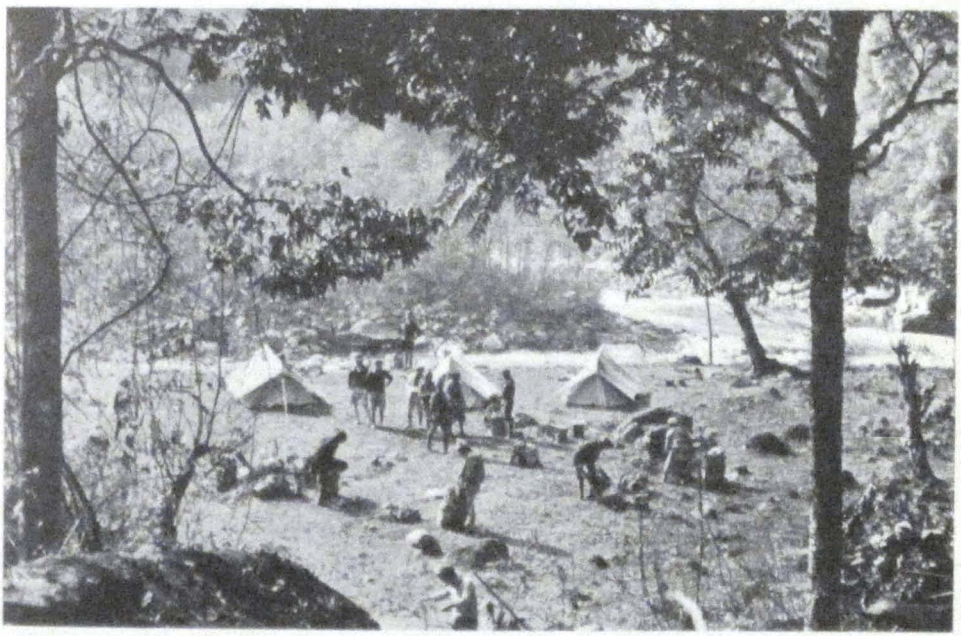
The view when we rose at 6 the next morning was magnificent. The whole valley was a hazy blue; pale, transparent bamboo thickets were grouped just below our camp and, away in the distance, framed by the steep sides of a tributary valley, were the high snows, dominated by Simvu and Siniolchu. Bulbuls and babblers were singing and vivid blue fly-catchers were flying to and fro. I took a photograph before we set off and stupidly left my ice-axe behind, so had to return several miles for it. The road was very busy and we saw many Tibetans with trains of mules and donkeys. The women are handsome; they wear silver charm-boxes studded with turquoise hanging round their necks, but some of them have red pigment plastered on their faces to protect their complexions. One family was taking dye-twigs back to Tibet; a tiny child carried a chicken in a bamboo cage: they had still a month's

journey before them. The leeches were very bad and began to get on our nerves. The bite passes unnoticed at the time, but it bleeds and bleeds and then tickles for days. Salt or dry tobacco leaf removes them at once.

We passed Singhik and then Tong, where we descended to cross the Teesta. Here the track is a lovely cobbled winding way with dense ferns and moss and sometimes wild strawberries on the banks. At the head of the valley there was usually a superb view of the snows. In some places the natives were burning the jungle to make clearings for barley and bananas. After a year or two they leave it to return to jungle and burn another clearing elsewhere. The Nepalis are very destructive and set fire to more than they need.

We stopped and made tea after waiting half an hour for the porters to come up. The sun left us about midday and the forest then became gloomy and sinister. A mile beyond the bridge we found a good camp site. We had done only ten miles, but they were long miles on this steep, stony track and we seemed to have been marching all day. Pallis' idea was that we should take it easy and build up our strength rather than use it up. Our three green trek-tents were on a level ledge—probably an old raised beach—30 yards wide and 30 feet above a bend of the Teesta. On the other side of our ledge was the track and then an almost vertical wall a thousand feet high. In spite of its steepness,

VIEW OF THE SNOWS FROM SINGHIK



CAMP BESIDE THE TEESTA

trees covered most of it, and creepers, covered with strange flowers, hung straight down. At the foot was an enormous old tree whose trunk was almost completely hidden by orchids. Below, the Teesta disappeared at once round a bend, and the valley seemed to be completely shut in by the steep forested walls, but high up in this V appeared a rounded tree-clad mountain and above that a solitary, snow-capped peak ; up-river, after several wooded spurs, was a brown hillside, apparently above the tree line, and beyond that again a great serrated wall of snow-spangled rock right across the valley.

We did not get away the next day until 10.30. Pallis thought it wicked to hurry in such country, but I was impatient to get on to the snow. We climbed and zigzagged along a carefully banked up track, then descended to Tsungtang, where a bare-footed, green-uniformed policeman made us fill in a form. Here the Lachen (big pass) and Lachung (little pass) meet, and the valley opens out to allow of a certain amount of cultivation—chiefly potatoes and barley. There is a fine bungalow here, the house of a forestry official, a post-office and several tin-roofed houses. The path hung precariously over the edge of vast cliffs. We looked down almost vertically 500 feet into the torrent. It came on to rain, so we camped at 2.30, down by the river, where we were much troubled by leeches and all manner of insects.

I went for a walk in the evening and saw my first yaks. They are most terrifying-looking creatures with huge shoulders, no dewlaps, thin necks and heads with sharp light upcurving horns. They have great tufts of black hair above the knees and a black bushy tail. They look very fierce but are really quite timid if approached with sufficient resolution.

The next day we left the tropical forest behind us, with its sinister shadows and hungry leeches, and almost reached the snows. We met several parties of yaks coming from the north. The yak herds seemed cheerful and friendly in a dignified way; some of them had huge Tibetan mastiffs with them, black, and black and tan, and often with great red ruff-like collars of wool to protect them from the bites of wild animals. These dogs were very aloof, they did not bark, but they gave us a wide berth. Our mules overtook us that morning; they too were taking it easy.

Looking up we could see only conifers—mostly deodars, on the hillsides above. Soon we started climbing in earnest. I noticed a lovely red maple with spear-head leaves not yet fully out. Down in the forest it seemed to be summer or autumn, but up here it was early spring, and the snow was just down to the tree line, about 12,000 feet. On the grassy paths between the deodars were masses of mauve primula (*denticulata*). After a sharp ascent through pine trees we came out on to a bare open fell-side and I experienced a great sense of liberation and joy

after the unnatural gloom of the forest. The heady smell of exotic plants and rotting vegetation was giving way to the purer scent of grass and pine trees. The ground was carpeted with primulas and we saw several huge magnolia trees, leafless, but with fantastically large, waxy, cream-coloured flowers. Around them bloomed rhododendron trees, scarlet, pink and mauve, and below were reedy ponds from which I put up some teal and a snipe. I saw some Himalayan pies with long streamer tails, and a chough with orange beak. The path returned again to the coniferous forest, and suddenly we turned a corner and came upon Lachen.

Lachen is like a Swiss village built on a steeply sloping bay of the hill. The village consists of about a hundred unpainted wooden houses with roofs of grey shingles weighted down with stones. Above, the steep slope, carpeted with bamboo scrub and smaller and smaller pines, eventually met a snow-clad summit of about 18,000 feet. Dominating the village is a monastery with golden ornaments on the roof. The lower walls of the houses are made of beaten mud and they have beautifully carved wood-work round the windows and doors. The bungalow at the foot of the village was a fine building with panelled rooms and a great open fireplace. The headman, a young and rather effeminate-looking Tibetan, came down and greeted us. Some of the women were very good-looking, but dirty. After tea, Pallis and I went up to the monastery, the finest

building in the place. We entered it barefooted. It had a floor of mud beaten to the consistency of cement. Inside it was very dark and smelt strongly of incense and dirt. At the far end of the room was an altar with hideous images in glass cases and on either side pigeon-holes filled with the pages of holy books pressed between carved wooden covers. Everywhere grotesquely carved faces leered down at us, and on the walls loomed weird paintings in rich colours of different deities and devils of the lama pantheon. Then we went up a crazy ladder and found other shrines above. In one room were stored all the properties for the devil-dances—hideous, grinning masks, some with horns attached, robes, swords and stiff boots. A Swedish woman missionary has been in Lachen for about fifteen years; we visited the austere little tin chapel, and remembered it was Easter Sunday. We stayed in the bungalow instead of camping and found it very comfortable.

The next day we paid off our muleteers and they set off back to Gangtok early in the morning. I saw many new birds here: vivid-coloured varieties of sun birds, robin-accentors, pipits, whistling thrushes, doves, cuckoos and brain-fever birds. The latter sits up in a tree all day saying deliberately, "Ouee—ouee-ou" or "brain *fee*-ver" at monotonously regular intervals, but it is almost impossible to see him.

After breakfast we went up to pay our respects to the abbot of the monastery. He sat cross-legged on

LACHEN. THE BUNGALOW IS THE FIRST BUILDING ON THE LEFT OF THE ROAD

a couch in a little room about nine feet square, a fat, cheerful, intelligent-looking man, more Mongolian-featured than most of the Lachen people. The room was packed with painted scrolls, silver tea-pots, holy-water vessels, drums, carved and painted furniture, leopard-skin rugs and even paper Christmas-decorations and tinsel balls. Pallis talked to him in Tibetan, chiefly about the French traveller, Madame David-Neel, who came through this way and got everybody into trouble because she had not a pass into Tibet.

We spent the afternoon packing the loads. The headman came in and arranged for 27 local porters to carry our gear up to the Base Camp on the Zemu Glacier, and for a man to bring up our mail and fresh eggs twice a week. We were going to try to reach the Green Lake where Bauer's base camp was in 1931. Roaf and I did a ten-mile walk in the evening. Pallis was still not very fit; it is difficult to throw off a cold or the remains of 'flu at such high altitudes. The next day when we sorted out the porters we found that only half of the Darjeeling men had boots, though they were all given three shillings in advance of their wages at Gangtok to buy Tibetan cloth boots with rope soles; these boots were not available at Lachen. We decided to take on our 21 Darjeeling men and 27 Lachen men as far as the Green Lake. We had 48 loads, including food, tents of all sorts, skis and high-climbing equipment. We had already chosen the three Darjeeling men who

would go high with us: Ang Nima, the man with Everest experience, Rinchen Sherpa and Rinchen Bhutia (the handsome rickshaw walla). These three were given their nailed boots, wool helmets, gloves and green windproof suits, also ice-axes. They immediately put them all on in spite of the warmth of the day. A certain amount of money was also paid out through Ishwar Singh, who was a very responsible head porter though I think the Sherpas rather resented that he was not one of them.

I watched the women planting potatoes in the fields. They have small plots of ground enclosed by low walls to keep the yaks and ponies away. All the work is done with big hoes. In the village I met a blind Tibetan being led along the track northward. He carried an enormous load and felt his way with a stick. Roaf and I walked up to Zemu Ram and then up towards the Tangu La, one of the routes taken by the Everest expedition. Up there the cedars suddenly give way to pines, with occasional larches and birch trees. In one place the trail had been swept away for a hundred yards by a landslide. We noticed a number of mouse-hares scuttling down into their burrows, little tailless rat-like animals resembling guinea-pigs.

Pallis had a long talk with the abbot, who asked him why we wanted to visit the high snows. Pallis replied that it was to find solitude. "Surely", the abbot replied, "you can find that best in your own heart."

The day before we left, the whole expedition went up to the monastery to be blessed by the old man, over fifty of us, a formidable procession. It was a remarkable ceremony. A dais covered with a leopard-skin rug was placed out of doors for the abbot, with a table in front of it and a gay curtain hung between poles behind it. Soon a grubby acolyte appeared with a little green dish of what looked like bread pellets, and an old whisky bottle full of a clear yellow liquid with a reddish sediment. Then the abbot appeared in a yellow silk robe with orange sleeves and red socks and a peculiar hat, something between a boater and a bowler covered with yellow silk. He removed this and sat buddha-like on the dais. The porters then filed past, each one prostrating himself three times so that his forehead touched the ground; when they had finished, he touched their heads with one hand. A few presented him with white muslin scarves. Then Pallis presented a large and beautiful Chinese painting which they hung up on the monastery wall. Some silk scarves were then brought and we went up one at a time and knelt before him. Each of us was given a small pellet of dough, which we had to eat, and some liquid from the bottle was poured into our hands (I was very relieved to find that we were not expected to drink it); with this we anointed our heads, the abbot mumbling blessings all the time. Finally he put a scarf over our shoulders. The porters were given smaller red scarves, and I noticed

that they snuffed the liquid up their noses. At the end of the ceremony, he replaced his hat and went inside the monastery.

When we descended the hill we found there was some sort of marriage ceremony in progress. In front of a gay canopy a row of padded cushions and a low table were set out and a procession appeared, led by two beautifully dressed girls in green and scarlet cloth boots, striped homespun aprons, green silk blouses and high peaked fur hats. They had rich turquoise and gold charm-boxes suspended from large necklaces of agate and coral beads. The bride-to-be appeared very downcast and shy. They sat round the table and tea was served in delicate jade or china cups on tall lotus-pattern silver saucers, then a man read aloud a long proclamation, and barley beer was served from a jar which had three ceremonial pats of yak butter on the spout. I tried to take some films but found it difficult owing to the crowd. The expedition presented the bride with a large plate of sugar and sweets.

In the evening Roaf and I went for a walk and met Finch and Hamblin, two young climbers who were going to attempt Lama Anden (19,250 feet), the peak just behind Lachen. We came upon a troop of about fifty langurs, great Himalayan monkeys with black faces surrounded by white ruffs and very long tails. We approached quite near before they trotted away, every now and then climbing cedar trees to get a better look at us. They had some very

tiny ones in the troop, but the largest stood as tall as men and we were a little afraid that they might turn upon us; however, they seemed very shy.

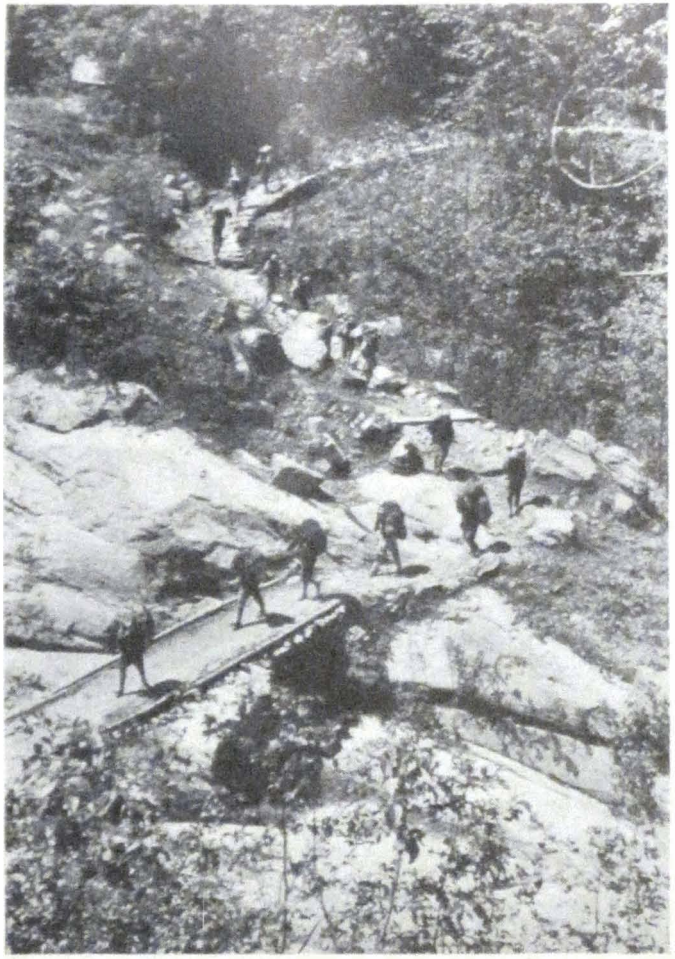
We left Lachen on April 16th, going up to the Zemu Ram bridge, and then leaving the Tangu La track and following the Zemu Chu by a small winding path. Many wild flowers were coming out, including coltsfoot, and a vetch with a single bright blue flower; I saw swallow-tail butterflies, also comma, painted ladies, clouded-yellow and small tortoiseshell. The birds and flowers and butterflies were all much more like the English varieties than the ones in the lower forest, and the climate was like spring in the Lake District. The path led up and down over very broken country and soon we were in a forest of rhododendron trees, most of them with red scaly bark and pendent spearheads of huge shiny leaves. As there was hardly any path we had to make our way through a tangle of rhododendron branches. Not many were yet in flower. We crossed a huge pile of avalanche snow and several clearings made by man; the Lachen people come up here to plant crops in the summer. We were obviously the first party up the Zemu Chu that year for we found a bridge broken over a torrent, a relic of last year's monsoon, and had to cross precariously by a tree trunk. The porters walked straight across it in spite of their loads though a misplaced foot would have meant certain death.

At last we came to an open clearing called Tsetang,

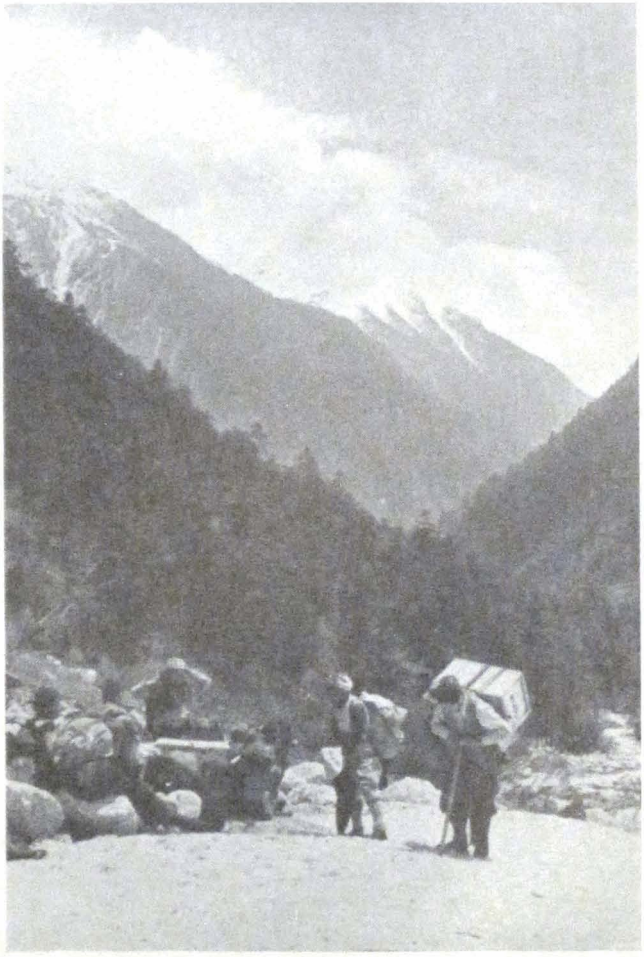
where all the pine trees were festooned with hanging bunches of pale-green lichen. There were masses of mauve primroses here and soft green moss and pine needles underfoot. We all stripped to the waist and sun-bathed.

It was very cold in the night with hoar frost over everything. I saw an eagle with a white tail, and a cinnamon woodpecker. We decided to stay over the next day because it was such a lovely place. I climbed the hill behind the camp and found a number of plaited yak hair nooses set for monal and blood pheasants. The going was terribly steep and the earth completely overgrown with tangled bamboo, rhododendron, juniper and thorn scrub. Sometimes I travelled for several hundred yards entirely in the branches without touching the ground at all. It was very difficult going and I was glad to get out on to the snow at last. I came down a snow couloir, sometimes having to lower myself hand over hand down the rhododendrons. When I got back to camp I found Finch and Hamblin were passing through on their way to their base camp for Lama Anden, another six miles on, but over on the Talung side. They had several women coolies who looked tougher than most of the men. In the evening several woodcock flew over on their 'rhoding' flight. We sat round a log fire after supper and watched fitful lightning in the distance.

It snowed in the night and Pallis' tent collapsed; luckily Cooke and I had gone out and loosened our



PORTERS CROSSING A CANTILEVER BRIDGE



FIRST SNOW: BETWEEN LACHEN AND THE ZEMU GLACIER

guys. We were off by nine after letting things dry. Flocks of snowfinches were passing, and grey and white Sikkim pigeons. We lunched by the Zemu Chu and watched a tufted duck. Later we followed an ill-defined path over very rough country, often having to climb over branches of rhododendron and use our hands on steep places. A path came in from the Talung monastery away on the left, crossed the Zemu Chu by a stout bridge and went up over the hill to Lhonak where Cooke and I had thoughts of climbing later on. More and more snow was lying, but some of the porters still went barefoot to save their boots. The bridge over the Lhonak Chu had collapsed, so we rebuilt it. No one who fell into one of these torrents would have a hope of getting out alive. The Lachen porters wanted to stop and they kept on telling us that each clearing was the last possible camp-site; but we intended to push on to the snout of the glacier so that we could reach the Green Lake in one march. This side of the valley was still heavily wooded but on the west side it was snowy, and only a little rhododendron and juniper scrub protruded. At 3.30 we found an open place where there was just room to pitch the tents. This was fortunate as it started to rain and soon turned to snow with low clouds and a bitter wind.

There was a sudden gleam of sun at 6 o'clock the next morning, so we got up and were away at 9. The track, after winding up and down among patches of snow and rhododendron scrub, suddenly

emerged through a final patch of fir trees and we saw the glacier snout blocking the valley. The ice was almost completely hidden in moraine deposit of earth and stone, but there was one steep grey wall of dirty ice festooned with icicles which looked like a Blake picture. The Zemu Chu emerges from beneath the snout. We climbed rapidly up to the right and kept between the moraine and the steep juniper and thorn-clad slope. The high peaks, up till now hidden from our sight, gradually appeared as we rose higher, but we could not distinguish them yet.

There was much more snow than we had expected, and we were not sure if the Lachen men would brave it, but once they started they went well. What a gang of thugs they looked! At last we found a place between the moraine and the hillside where there was level snow for the tents and juniper wood for fuel up above. A truculent, squint-eyed Lachen man had tried to bully Pallis into stopping earlier, but without success, for Pallis hides a good deal of determination behind his mild manner. It tried to snow, then dazzling sunlight dispersed the clouds which hung in hazy bands round Siniolchu and the shoulder of Simvu, which we could now make out across the glacier. All at once the sunshine won and the mists were banished and the beautiful needle of Siniolchu was revealed, fluted with delicate ice couloirs at a formidable angle above hanging glaciers and long avalanche-swept

snow slopes. It is one of the most beautiful and terrifying of mountains. Simvu was not clear from here; it seemed to have several summits connected by ice-ridges, and neighbouring Kangchenjunga blocked the whole of the top of the valley. Heavy cumulus clouds hid Lama Anden and Lachen. No wonder the natives worship Kangchenjunga, it dominates the whole glacier basin and seems to control even the weather. The porters spread piles of scrub at the foot of some steep rocks and lit a fire on the snow and sat round it gossiping and playing cards until the mist descended and it came on to snow again.

It was bitterly cold the next day till the sun reached us and made a lovely dappled pattern on the snow. Ishwar Singh read the list of loads out from the other end, thus causing much consternation among the porters, who get attached to one load and do not like changing it; the squint-eyed Lachen man was particularly rebellious. The view was splendid across to Siniolchu and Little Siniolchu and down the valley to Lama Anden. It was 9 o'clock before we had dug out everything and got under way. The porters agreed to leave their sleeping gear at this camp and to come up to the Green Lake and then return in the evening. Cooke and I went ahead to make a track for the porters as there was a foot or two of soft snow. We came to the conclusion that their best route would be along the ridge of the moraine, where they would

have either hard snow or rock. However, almost all of them preferred the level strip between the moraine and the hill, although they sank in knee-deep at every step.

Along the hillside there was first rhododendron scrub, then above it only juniper, and snow in the gullies, but as we rose higher snow covered most of the country. Cooke and I walked ahead of the porters making a track, though we often went over our knees in snow. I felt very fit and enjoyed the responsibility of going ahead. The Lachen men kept on refusing to come any further and it did not look as if we would reach the Green Lake, but as there was so much snow about we thought it would probably all be covered, and as we wanted to camp on bare ground it appeared better to stop fairly soon. Pallis nursed them on, mainly by joking and ragging with them in Tibetan. The squint-eyed man was the ringleader but luckily he had a sense of humour, though he and Ishwar Singh nearly came to blows once or twice. At 2 o'clock we reached a south-facing level bay in the hillside. It was free of snow, and as the Lachen men were giving trouble again and it seemed to be the last chance of a snow-free camp-site, we made up our minds to establish our Base Camp here, and as soon as this decision was made known everyone was very cheerful. We gave all the porters biscuits, butter and cheese. Jun Singh was feeling very sick and headachy and lay on the ground moaning. I

started to feel the same; carrying a rucksack and making steps over new snow was probably too much at this height—we were now at 14,500 feet.

We paid off all the porters who were going back and then raffled one of the empty ration boxes and three empty tins. The Tibetans delight in any form of gambling and were very happy. Oddly enough, the four prizes all went to Lachen men and the truculent squint-eyed grumbler won the box. It was sad to part with our Darjeeling men. In addition to our original three, Pallis took Kipak, a little man who was by way of being a wit, and one Ang Babu, a very enthusiastic young porter who had several times come with tears in his eyes and begged to be kept on. So there were twelve of us altogether: we five, Ishwar and Jun Singh, Ang Nima, Rinchen Sherpa, Rinchen Bhutia, Kipak and Ang Babu.

When the porters had gone I was overcome with violent nausea and headache; my one desire was to lie down, and as soon as the tent was up I crawled miserably into my sleeping-bag. This was my first attack of mountain sickness—it was exactly like an acute attack of sea-sickness—and was brought on, I suppose, by my having done too much before getting used to the height. I felt much better the next morning but still had pain behind the eyes.

The weather for the next fortnight was very bad. We had intended to wait for a few days to acclimatise, and then to move our Base Camp up to the Green Lake as soon as the snow should melt there. But the

weather did not improve and it was twelve days before we left the camp for good. Each day it snowed; the clouds came right down over the surrounding peaks and we could merely sit in camp, nursing our impatience and listening to the snow whispering on the sides of the tent and to the sinister sound of avalanches pouring off the mountains with a noise like trains crossing distant viaducts. It took us some time to acclimatise even though we had moved up so slowly from Gangtok. I found difficulty in sleeping and my appetite was uncertain. To turn over in bed or to dress required a definite effort which left me breathless and exhausted; we were all rather short-tempered, and an air of disappointment pervaded the camp, partly because we were held up by the weather, and also because Pallis had been refused permission to enter Tibet. The expedition doctor made our lives a burden by carrying out a series of bloodthirsty and wearisome experiments: he examined our hearts and carefully felt our pulses after different degrees of exertion; he pierced the lobes of our ears with a bodkin and compared the colour of the blood produced with a card showing all shades of sanguinity—it was interesting to see how much darker it had turned as we climbed higher—and our hearts were apparently slightly larger and our pulses more rapid since leaving Lachen. The intelligence tests were the most exacting, though, oddly enough, my mental reactions seemed to improve with altitude.

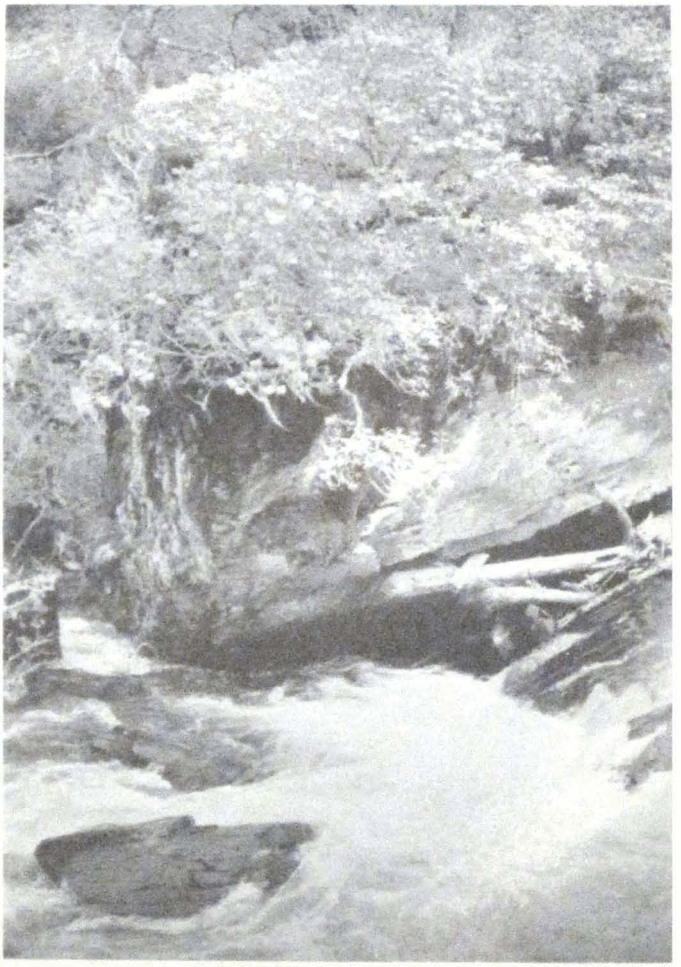
I grew increasingly impatient during this fort-

night's waiting; I was longing to get on to the high snows, but afraid that I might not acclimatise and still more afraid that my standard of climbing might not be adequate. Although I knew I could last as long as anybody, I was not much good on really difficult rock, my experience of step-cutting and ice-work was small and I was afraid I might impede the party. The most difficult part of a Himalayan attempt is choosing a route and deciding just what slope is practicable and safe under given conditions, and at what stage one can no longer risk the porters' lives and at what stage one's own. These more difficult decisions I would not be called upon to make, but nevertheless I had a continual sense of apprehension and foreboding.

On our first day at the Base Camp I noticed two animals grazing on the grassy slope above the camp. These turned out to be burrhal, the big-horned mountain sheep, and I am ashamed to say that I, having a great desire for some fresh meat, was rash enough to deplore the fact that we had no firearms with us. Pallis and Nicholson were simply horrified to think that I could even contemplate such an act of sacrilege in such a place: I suppose they were right, but the hunter's instinct dies hard. However, I consoled myself by stalking them with a camera. One day when, as usual, the mist was down over the tops, I stalked a small flock which I picked out about a thousand feet above the camp; using the cover provided by a rocky gully, I crawled to within a hundred

yards of where they were grazing just on the borderline of the mist, with the help of which I was able to get even nearer. However, a young burrhal sheep which seemed to be on guard became suspicious and we indulged in a staring match which lasted the best part of an hour. The rest of the herd were grazing placidly, two were even lying down. Several had enormous horns curling down on either side. They had barred faces and black patches on the front of their legs and conspicuous white backsides, made still more noticeable by black scuts. At last the sentry disappeared over the ridge whither the rest of the herd had gone. After a few minutes I advanced, but the old busybody returned and I had to lie still for another half-hour. An Apollo butterfly settled on my face and a lammergeyer with great spade tail and ten-foot wing span came swooping over me with a shrill whining noise like the wind in telegraph wires. Again the mist came right down and I ran to the side and then upward, making a wide detour. But I had forgotten to allow for the height and had to wait some minutes for my breathing to recover: one must not hurry uphill at 16,000 feet, for at that height there is only about half the normal amount of oxygen in the air. I went on again as soon as I could so as to be just above the flock as they grazed uphill. Without warning, the mist rose and I found myself right in the middle of a flock, not of seven or eight as I had imagined, but about thirty. The nearest one, a great heavy-

ORCHIDS AND TREE FERNS IN THE TROPICAL FOREST



RHODODENDRONS OVERHANGING A TORRENT

horned ram, was only ten yards away; he saw me at once and with shrill bleats of alarm raced up the hill. The rest of the flock panicked and, not knowing where the danger was, raced past me to disappear in single file over the shoulder of the hill. It was one of the most wonderful sights I have ever seen and luckily I had the presence of mind to film them as they went.

There were all kinds of birds on the Zemu Glacier, many of them species I had never seen before. Choughs flew over the camp every day, and beautiful grey and white Sikkim pigeons came up each morning from the woods below to feed on the snow-free slopes above the camp, and returned each evening. On the steep rocks above the Green Lake I saw Hodgson's Grandula, a bird the size of a starling but with vivid powder-blue plumage. The many varieties of snow and mountain finches defied identification.

The day after we reached the Base Camp we unpacked the skis and went up to the Green Lake. The skis were of ash, six inches shorter than is usual and with *alpina* toe-irons. The ski-ing was very disappointing for the snow was slushy and in any case was fast disappearing. We found the Green Lake was still hidden by snow, but there was a south-facing slope near by, which we thought would be ready for our tents in less than a week's time. We started carrying loads up the glacier, and continued until we had a substantial depot there. The Zemu

Glacier is unlike any other I have seen. Between the steep hillsides and the moraines marking the edge of the glacier there were level grassy belts several hundred yards wide. In some places these were formed by alluvial fans brought down by the many streams which broke up these level bands. The lateral moraine, about a hundred feet high, ran the whole length of the glacier, the top, already bare of snow, being marked by patches of heather, especially on the south side; the steep northern slope, which faced our camp, was still snow-covered and provided excellent nursery slopes for ski-ing. The actual glacier was about a mile wide from moraine to moraine and was a maze of old ice, great boulders, heaps of earth and sand, and even frozen lakes and vertical walls of ice fifty feet high. To cross it one had continually to climb up and down incredibly steep and irregular mounds fifty to a hundred feet high. At this time the moraine was rendered still more impassable by a treacherous covering of snow, so that one could not see whether one's feet were on loose or firm stones, and often the whole thing would crumble away beneath one and roll to the bottom of the hill—most unpleasant when one was carrying a fifty-pound load.

Our days were spent either in carrying loads—with the porters—to the depot we had made on the moraine near the Green Lake, just where the Nepal Gap Glacier meets the Zemu at 16,200 feet, or in making short expeditions into the mountains to the

north of our camp. In the evenings we used to sit round an open fire of juniper logs which the porters brought from farther down the valley. We lived on *chupatties*—pancakes made from flour and water—potatoes, eggs, rice and dahl, porridge and occasional tins of sardines or tongue.

On April 25th, Nicholson, Cooke and Roaf left the camp to attempt a 19,500-foot peak on the north-east. Pallis and I set off up the Zemu Glacier with a view to making a reconnaissance of Simvu. We had decided that Siniolchu was beyond our powers, and even Simvu with its five summits and ice-fluted ridges might well turn us back, and seemed quite likely to do so if the weather did not improve.

CHAPTER FIVE

Simvu

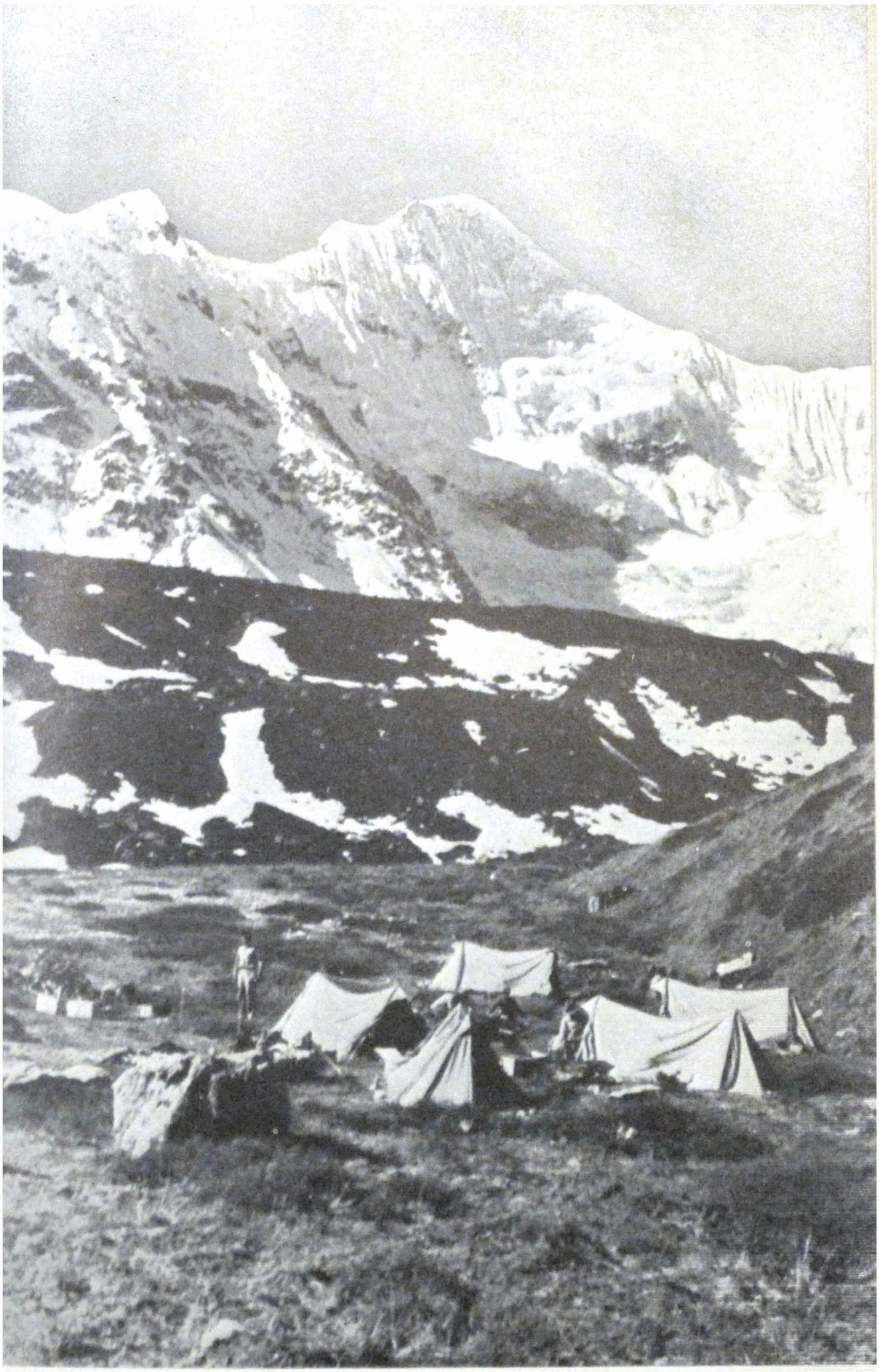
THE pioneers of exploration and climbing in Sikkim were Sir Joseph Hooker, that energetic botanist and traveller; Sir Douglas Freshfield, the distinguished Alpine and Caucasian mountaineer, and Dr. Kellas, an amazingly enterprising climber who for many years conquered more peaks in a single season than most people attempt in a lifetime. Dr. Hooker spent most of 1848 and 1849 in Sikkim. In April of the latter year, in spite of the immense transport difficulties of those days, he found his way up the Teesta to Lachen and made several attempts to climb Lama Anden (19,500 feet). From here, he followed the south bank of the Zemu Chu (we kept to the north) and endeavoured to reach the Zemu Glacier. Being unsuccessful in this, he crossed over to the Lachung district and made unsuccessful attempts to climb Kangchenjau (22,700 feet) and Pauhunri (23,180 feet), in the extreme north-east of Sikkim, returning over the Dongkya La (18,130 feet) to Lachung. On his return to Darjeeling he and his companion, Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent at Darjeeling, were taken prisoners and detained at Tumlong, a few miles to the north of Gangtok, by Namgay, the influential native Prime

Minister of Sikkim. Long negotiations were necessary before the explorers were released, and as a result of this outrage the district to the south of the Great Rangit River, including the Darjeeling district with its rich tea gardens, was annexed by the British Government. Darjeeling itself had been ceded to us by the Sikkim Raja in 1817, after the Gurkha war when this whole district had been conquered and annexed by the Nepalese. Further exploration of the district was prevented by the open hostility of the inhabitants until the famous 'Pundits' took up the work. These romantic figures were Bengalis, trained by the Survey of India. At great personal risk they would penetrate in disguise the forbidden parts of Sikkim and Tibet and return, possibly years later, with the data from which the earliest maps of these districts were compiled. But the Pundits did not visit the Zemu district.

The Survey of India Records next tell of "the Lama", a mysterious hillman who was at one time a schoolmaster at Darjeeling. In 1883, he travelled by the Teesta Valley and Lachung route to the Dongkya La, after which he reached the forbidden city of Lhasa. In the same year other native surveyors explored the Zemu and Talung valleys and reached the northern frontier of Sikkim. Between 1889 and 1902, Mr. Claud White, then Political Officer of Sikkim, made some exploratory journeys in the Zemu Glacier district. First he crossed the Guicha La and descended the Talung Glacier to the Teesta

River, an adventurous journey, for up till that time no one had visited the gorges between Pandim and Simvu. In the following year he worked up the Talung Chu, from its confluence with the Teesta near Singhik, and then past Talung Monastery on the Ringbi Chu and over the Yeumtso La, between Lama Anden and Siniolchu, into the Zemu Chu. He even ascended the glacier to a height of 17,500 feet (about level with the Green Lake), but was forced to return by bad weather. From the Zemu Glacier he went northward into Lhonak.

In 1899, Sir Douglas Freshfield made the expedition to this district which is so well described in his book *Round Kangchenjunga*. Leaving Darjeeling in early September, his party ascended the north bank of the Zemu Chu and camped a little above 15,000 feet, just short of what he called the Green Lake. His plan was to ascend the glacier and explore the possibilities of the Zemu Gap and Nepal Gap approaches to Kangchenjunga. Bad weather, however, drove him over to Lhonak to examine the northern approaches of the mountain. In 1907, that amazingly enterprising and reticent climber, Dr. Kellas, who died at Kampa Dzong on his way to Everest in 1920, spent a season in the Zemu Glacier district. In May 1907, Kellas visited the Zemu Glacier via Lachen and reached the Simvu Saddle (16,570 feet) and the Zemu Gap (19,300 feet) for the first time. In September of the same year, assisted by Swiss guides, he made three attempts



BASE CAMP BESIDE LATERAL MORAINE OF ZEMU GLACIER. LITTLE SINIOLCHU IN BACKGROUND

to reach the top of Simvu but was driven back by new snow and bad weather. In 1920, just before starting for Everest, he is supposed to have climbed —though this is not absolutely certain—Lama Anden (19,250 feet) the peak near Lachen. In 1920, Harold Raeburn, accompanied by Colonel Tobin, examined the south-east approaches of Kangchenjunga. Crossing the Guicha La, they approached the Zemu Gap by the Talung and Tongshyong glaciers, but the narrow entrance of the gap and the bordering mountain sides were raked by such a continuous hail of rocks and debris that they came to the conclusion that an approach by that route would have been suicidal. (This was in July and August.) In 1925, Mr. N. A. Tombazi made the first ascent of the Zemu Gap from the south, via the Talung and Tongshyong glaciers. He pronounced this approach to be unsuitable for laden porters. In the following year, Major Boustead reached the Zemu Gap by the same route and stressed the danger of this region owing to frequent avalanches and thick mists.

In 1929, after the monsoon, the German Kangchenjunga Expedition—under the leadership of Dr. Paul Bauer—visited the Zemu Glacier by way of the Teesta River and Lachen; it was probably their track through the rhododendron and bamboo scrub that we followed beside the Zemu Chu. One party was driven back three times in an attempt to climb the Simvu Saddle with a view to making a long-

distance reconnaissance of Kangchenjunga from across the Zemu Glacier. They concluded that the Simvu massif was in reality quite different from its appearance on the maps, and they also discovered that it was quite impossible to reach the main peak directly from the saddle. Meanwhile, Bauer, having decided that the glacier valley between Kangchenjunga and the Twins was an impossible approach, set about the assault of the north-eastern arête with characteristic German thoroughness, while another party attacked the eastern approach from the Zemu Gap. The last week of August was spent in strenuous attempts to reach the arête, but the party was driven back by almost insuperable difficulties. At last, in early September, by developing an entirely new technique of ice-work, the ridge was reached. This technique consisted in hacking and tunnelling through the great ice pinnacles and gendarmes which guarded the arête, so that it could be made safe even for porters, and ice caves were hewn in which the climbers and porters could pass the night out of the wind and safe from avalanches.

At last, by September 26th, the last 200-foot ice gendarme had been passed, by the remarkable expedient of cutting a 25-foot tunnel—a task which took two whole days—and by October 3rd they camped at 23,400 feet, ready for the final assault, with a party of six Germans and four porters. Then the weather broke and for four days a blizzard raged. The party made two assaults and reached a

height of 24,450 feet, but the bitter wind and six feet of fresh snow forced them back. On the way down they marched through a lane of snow the height of a man and the route was intermittently swept by frightful avalanches. That the return journey was completed without any accident more serious than one member being badly frost-bitten was a wonderful achievement. Although the attempt was unsuccessful, it set up a new standard in Himalyan mountaineering, for up to this time no one had attempted to climb one of the steep fluted ice-ridges so characteristic of the Himalaya.

In 1931 the Bavarians returned to the attack. This time a height of about 25,260 feet was reached by following the same bold tactics. When the end of the N.E. spur was attained, it was discovered that the main N.N.E. ridge of the mountain—of which the N.E. spur is but a tributary—was at a higher level, and the steep 300-foot wall separating them could not safely be climbed owing to dangerous snow conditions. On their retreat from Kangchenjunga in late October 1931, Dr. Allwein and Herr Pircher crossed the Zemu Glacier and ascended the Simvu Saddle (16,570 feet). From here they made for the first time a descent on to the Passanram Glacier 2600 feet below. After a week's very arduous travelling through completely unexplored country they reached Talung.

It will be seen from this short summary of previous expeditions to the Zemu Glacier district, that con-

siderable reconnaissance was necessary before we could start the actual attempt on Simvu. On April 25th Pallis and I, accompanied by Ang Nima, Rinchen Bhutia and Kipak, set off for the Zemu Gap to examine the south-western approach to the Simvu massif. Following the level going between the moraine and the mountain we reached the Green Lake and found a camp site on a snow-free platform at the foot of the great rock-face to the north. The porters made a fire of juniper and azalea scrub and we sat round it enjoying the aromatic fragrance of the smoke until long after dark. We had pemmican, rice and potatoes for supper, followed by tea. During the night avalanches frequently roared down in the distance and fitful flashes of lightning lit up the inside of the tent. I had never camped as high as this (16,500 feet) before, but seemed to be well acclimatised after our gradual ascent, and slept fairly well. In the early morning I awoke to hear the extraordinary bubbling note of snow-cock and the querulous call of choughs from the hill above the camp.

Ang Nima and Rinchen (Kipak having returned to the Base Camp after carrying up a load) rose early and got our breakfast of tea and biscuits ready, having previously prepared their own. It was a clear, cloudless morning with little wind. The porters took our rucksacks, about 35 lbs. each, while we carried the skis, hoping to be able to use them higher up the glacier where the surface was

RINCHEN SHERPA, RINCHEN BHUTIA, ANG BABU, ANG NIMA

NICHOLSON, COOKE, ROAF, CHAPMAN, PALLIS

more regular and the snow deeper. We walked round the Green Lake which still belied its name, though it was by this time thawing into muddy brown pools. We crossed the Nepal Gap Glacier and fought our way up and down the rough surface of the glacier whose dirty ice was covered with moraine debris and discoloured patches of snow. After two or three hours we reached the comparatively level area of snow which runs down the middle of the glacier. Here we put on our skis and took the rucksacks from the porters, who were to return to the Green Lake, pick up their tent and bedding and return to the Base Camp.

It was necessary to be a very good ski-er to work over such rough ground, carrying rucksacks of 30 or 40 lbs. in weight. After a time we put sealskins on our skis and made better progress and found it less exhausting, though also less exciting. We enjoyed good views up to the snowy dome of the Sugarloaf, then to the Twins and on to the several summits of Kangchenjunga. Straight in front of us as we advanced up the glacier was the Bavarian's formidable ridge. Looking at those broken, icy pinnacles set at so steep an angle, it was amazing to think that Bauer's parties had climbed so high. I wrote in my diary: "The Tent Peak looks quite impossible from here: the last 1000 feet is of snow-plastered rock set at an impregnable angle. The Twins look possible, if only one could get on to the ridge. They would have to be approached from the Nepal Gap.

Siniolchu might yield to the Bavarian technique; it is certainly beyond us. I think Simvu is climbable; being a complicated massif, like Kangchenjunga it may be attacked in so many different ways; but it is no easy matter: even if we reach one of the summits, it will be a terrific task to cut along the icy knife-edge ridges and complete the traverse. I shall be petrified with fear if I ever get up there."

We camped beside an enormous boulder just opposite to where the Kangchenjunga Glacier comes in. In the middle of the ice-fall of this glacier was an island of rock where lies the grave of Schaller, one of Bauer's 1932 party. We noticed that the ridge coming straight down from Simvu towards our camp looked quite possible, and though the rolling snow slopes of the Upper Zemu Glacier were most tempting, we decided to examine this ridge on the morrow. After all, everyone who has been up to the Zemu Gap says that the Simvu ridge is unclimbable, though I have an idea that it might be possible to descend the far side of the Gap and approach Simvu from behind—from the south-west. We had Ovaltine and sardines for supper and were asleep by 7.30. On the ice we were using small Li-lo air mattresses about 3 ft. 6 ins. by 2 ft. as insulation. These were excellent, but were on the short side. In double eiderdown sleeping-bags, and still wearing most of our clothes, we were as warm as we could have wished to be. As usual it clouded up in the evening; this phenomenon is probably due to the fact that this

district is between the low moist Teesta and Talung valleys on one side and the high wind-swept Tibetan plateau on the other, consequently there are usually high winds until after the monsoon, when the warmth of the valleys is brought up to the level of the Tibetan plateau, thus eliminating convectional disturbances. On April 27th we were woken up at 6 by the sun, which blazed on to our tent. The view of Kang-chenjunga, with the sun reddening its high snows and casting purple shadows into every icy couloir against a background of translucent blue, was majestic in the extreme, almost terrifying. After strong Ovaltine and sardines for breakfast we left our tent standing and set off at 8.

I was very reluctant to abandon the attractive-looking ski-slopes of the Zemu Gap, but even from here we could see that the arête of Simvu to the east of the Gap was quite unclimbable, as all previous climbers have reported, and Pallis was very much excited by the possibilities of the ridge which ran down between two glaciers. We walked across and examined the magnificently turbulent ice-fall to the south of the ridge. The left of the ice-fall was possible but was rather badly crevassed, so we kept to the right, climbing up very steep rock to avoid the crevasses. We succeeded in getting on to the ridge about 1550 feet above the glacier by working our way up a gully and then out over some very exposed rock. We found a suitable place for the big tent on a wide ledge, and Pallis seemed to think that it

would be possible to force a way up to the top of the ice arête which connected our buttress with the main massif. We glissaded straight down a steep, snowy couloir between the rock and the ice-fall. I had found it very exhausting climbing uphill at 17,000 or 18,000 feet, but descending was as easy as at sea-level; going up, it seemed essential to get into some sort of rhythm, so that one moved mechanically, otherwise one soon became exhausted; indeed, I soon discovered that this matter of rhythm was the whole secret of high altitude climbing. We decided to return to our tent and to set off back to the Base Camp the same day, in order to make the most of the unusual spell of good weather: it had not snowed for two whole days. We packed up the tent and were away at 1.30. The ski-ing was good but rather slow as the afternoon sun made the snow sticky. Getting up again after falling with a 30-lb. rucksack on one's back was terribly exhausting. At 4 o'clock we reached the place from which the porters had returned; I could not face the prospect of carrying both rucksack and skis for two hours over the rough moraine, so I suggested that we should ski right down the far side of the glacier, where there appeared to be plenty of snow, until we were level with our camp, and then dump our skis and walk home across the glacier. This turned out to be a very bad plan and we got into some terribly rough country. Pallis, who was not a very experienced ski-er, became very tired, and as the going on the far side was im-

possibly rough we left our skis there and wearily crossed the glacier again to the Green Lake, which we reached at 6.30, just as it got dark. It was a terrific walk, up and down the interminable ridges of the moraine, and as the sun had melted the snow we often sank in waist-deep, and twisted our ankles between boulders hidden in the snow. It took us two hours to get back to the camp from the Green Lake and we were tired out. Often we sat on boulders and rested, and sometimes fell asleep. There was just enough light from the crescent moon and stars for us to find our way. We were utterly exhausted by the time we reached the camp and had reached the stage when we were walking like machines, scarcely aware of the very still night and the fact that the clouds had lifted. Orion's belt and Sirius shone with unnatural brilliance over Kangchenjunga, Regulus and the great sickle of Leo were straight above us; Arcturus and Virgo hung low across the valley. The brightness of the stars in the clear mountain atmosphere is one of the greatest joys of a Himalayan expedition. The others were asleep, but they soon turned out and cooked us some supper. Cooke and Nicholson had failed to get up their peak, being turned by very steep ice near the summit.

Next day Cooke and Nicholson climbed the Lagerberg (18,977 feet) from the camp. They found that one of Bauer's party had previously climbed it and left a cairn on the summit. The porters were sent down to Lachen for more food, as with two more of

them than we had originally intended to keep, supplies were running short. On April 29th it snowed most of the day, so Roaf and I walked across the glacier and collected the skis which Pallis and I had left there. How I grew to hate that Zemu moraine! On April 30th, Pallis and Cooke attempted the peak to the north of the Green Lake. The rest of us went up with them, carried loads to the dump, camped there and returned to the Base Camp next day. Pallis and Cooke returned in the evening, having made a first ascent of the 19,500-foot peak overlooking the Nepal Gap Glacier. They were surprised to find that the top part of the peak, which was of snow and ice, had crevasses right across the summit. They had had a wonderful view down on to the Hidden Glacier which separated us from the Lhonak district.

In the evening we boiled up a Christmas pudding and, having put in a rupee, gave some to each of the porters. Ang Nima found the rupee and later brought it to Pallis to ask if he was really allowed to keep it. It seemed to him too good to be true. Next day it was overcast and snowing. Roaf and I went up to the dump to collect some food as we were running short at the Base Camp. Ishwar Singh and the other men whom we had sent down to Lachen to bring up more food and mails returned, together with half a dozen Lachen porters, on May 3rd. There were about a dozen letters for me, some of which brought exciting news, as will be explained in

the following chapter. In the meantime, now that the Base Camp was restocked with provisions, we were ready to start up Simvu as soon as the weather improved and we thought it would be as well to move across the Zemu Glacier and establish a higher camp on the Simvu Glacier, so that we should be ready to take advantage of any fine weather there might be.

On May 4th, Cooke and I, with Ang Nima and Rinchen Sherpa, set off to carry the skis across to the foot of the Simvu Glacier. We took an hour to the Green Lake—a record with heavy loads, and worked our way across the glacier, carefully cairning a route for the benefit of later parties. The going was terribly rough as all the boulders and steep slopes of stones seemed to be most precariously balanced and were ready to slide down like a moving staircase the moment one touched them. Once I fell down a crevasse up to my armpits, but none of the crevasses on this part of the glacier go very deep and we could see the bottom. It is not really necessary to use a rope on the Zemu Glacier, though most of the tributary glaciers and the Upper Zemu Glacier, being much steeper and more active, are dangerously crevassed. Once across the glacier we had to get over the south moraine and then climb up the right-hand (or easterly) moraine of the Simvu Glacier. It was extremely difficult to find a route here as the moraine was very steep and there was a crevasse parallel to it with waist-deep snow everywhere. As

usual it came on to snow in the evening and we were glad of our row of cairns to find the way back. While we were crouching for shelter behind a rock near the Green Lake, I suddenly heard a familiar note and saw three terns flying overhead. I wonder if they had lost their way, or if the Zemu Glacier is used by them as a regular migration route, and, if so, where on earth were they off to? When we reached the Base we were completely encrusted in snow like snow men.

May 5th and 6th were overcast and it snowed most of the time. We could do nothing except send more loads up to the Green Lake. Everything except our personal gear was then ready for the attempt at Simvu. On May 7th it again snowed practically all day. We were getting depressed and even talked of moving down to Tsetang and waiting until the weather should improve; we were not high enough to be actually deteriorating, in fact we were all extraordinarily well acclimatised, but we were getting stale, and some of us found that living on eggs, porridge, rice, dahl and potatoes was not having a good effect on our digestions. Personally, I longed for meat.

On the evening of May 8th, Ishwar Singh put up a prayer flag on the summit of a large boulder near the camp and burnt incense before it. This seemed to have the required effect upon the weather, for that evening the stars gradually appeared through the mist and in the middle of the night I awoke to

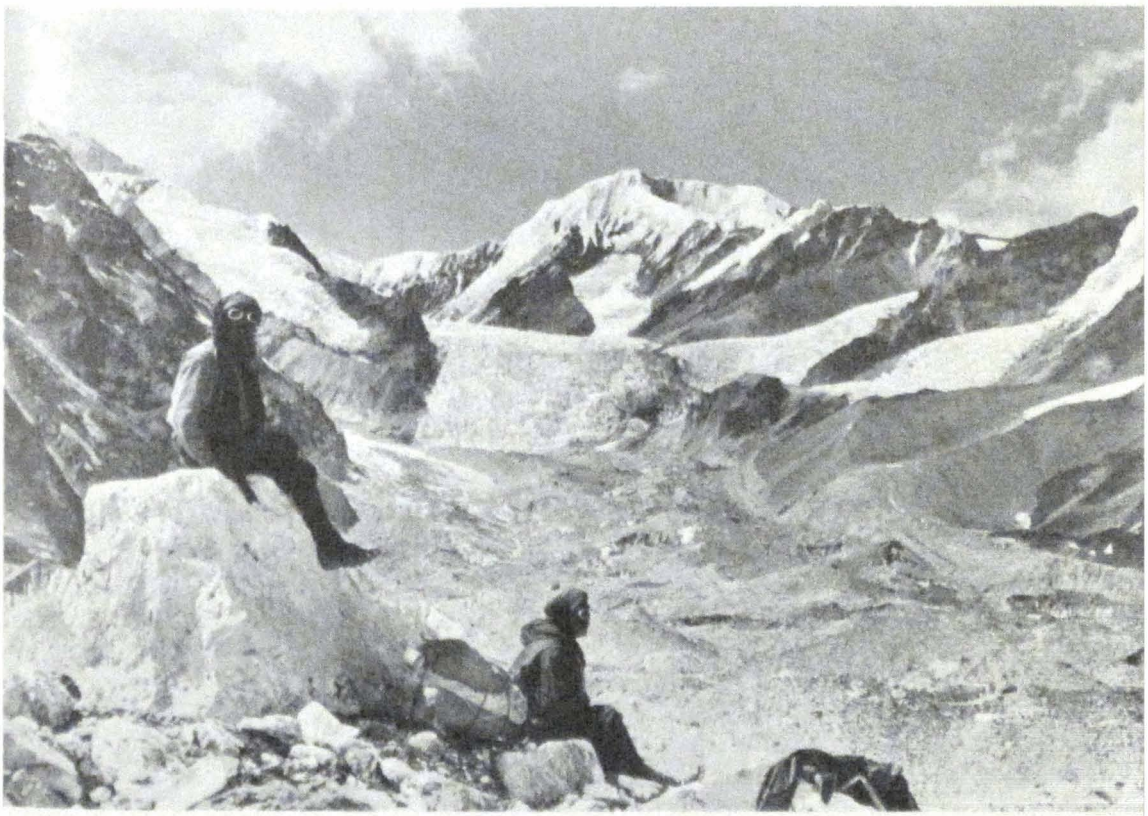
hear a rushing wind and the tent flapping furiously. This must have marked the exodus of the devils, for next day, May 9th, it was perfectly fine, and we got up at 6 o'clock in glorious sunshine. We sorted out all the gear and were ready to start by 10 o'clock. Just before we left the camp the porters lit more incense on the top of the boulder and, all wearing their green windproof suits, waved their arms and shouted invocations. We all went as far as the Green Lake depot and then Ishwar, who carried only an umbrella and Pallis' rucksack up to the dump, returned alone to look after the Base Camp, while the rest of us sat down with field glasses to have a final look at Simvu and to plan our route. We would go to the upper Simvu Saddle and attempt the arête running from there up to the north-east summit; if all went well, we would traverse the summit ridge and descend by the route that Pallis and I had discovered on our reconnaissance trip. The mountain looked most formidable, and I remember wishing that the assault were behind and not before us. A Himalayan peak has the odds heavily in its favour. Its defences are varied : it can drive back a party by the difficulty of its approaches, by the effects of altitude, and above all by the many vagaries of weather.

We crossed the Zemu Glacier and climbed up the Simvu Glacier moraine to our camp-site at about 800 feet above the Zemu Glacier. Roaf and I ski-ed, but it was very steep and the snow was patchy

and uneven. There was a slight wind and clouds were forming over Kangchenjunga, the Twins and the distant Tent peak. We put up three Base Camp tents and a two-man bivouac tent. Pallis and Nicholson shared one, Cooke and I another, the four porters the third, and Roaf had the bivouac tent. (Jun Singh and Kipak had returned to the Base Camp from the foot of the Simvu Glacier.) It was a heavenly starlit night and we could see the Simvu Saddle, a wide col like a Swiss pass, only a mile or two up the glacier and not at a very much higher level than ourselves. The Pole Star, which was obscured at the Base Camp, was visible, and Arcturus, Spica and Corvus ; Orion was hidden, but we saw Procyon, Castor and Pollux, and Regulus straight above us with Leo like a great question mark. Should we get up Simvu or not? It was good to smell a primus in a tent again. I had a slight altitude cough, but none of us had sore throats; Pallis' cough was still very bad. There was a strongish wind in the night and fine snow pattered mournfully on the tent and ran down the canvas with a steady soft swishing noise like the sound of a boat's gunwale. I had cold feet all night and an icy patch between my shoulders. Cooke put his feet on a coil of rope and was warm. Cooke and Pallis were to be on the first rope and Nicholson and I on the second. Roaf was to hold the camp.

Cooke and I got up at 6.30 and made tea for the porters so that they could go down to the foot of the

FIRST CAMP ON THE WAY TO SIMVU



CROSSING THE ZEMU GLACIER MORAINE

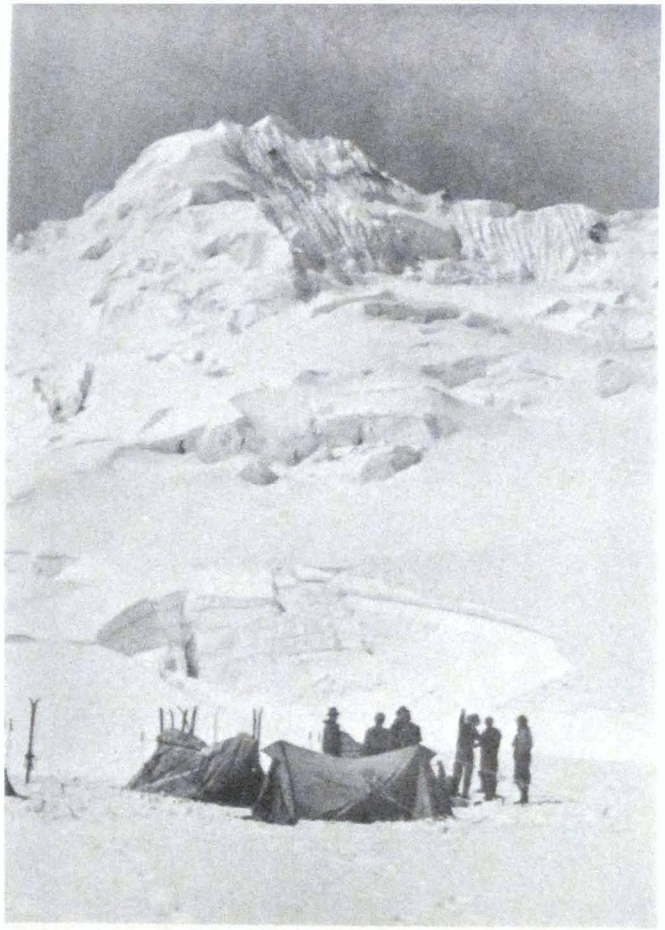
moraine for the rest of the gear. Pallis did not like them using a primus in their tent, so we had to prepare all their meals: a strange inversion of services. We were going to take half the gear up to the Upper Saddle so that we could move on the next day with all the rest of it. It was overcast at 8 A.M., but blue sky showed over the Upper Saddle; by 9 it was snowing. We all had tea, biscuits and butter and cheese in our tent and had to lie up for the day. A long discussion about the War and the merits of different nations as colonists led to a violent argument about the Public Schools; as we represented Harrow, Winchester, Shrewsbury, Liverpool Grammar School and Sedbergh between us, we had a fair variety of experience. The porters returned at 10. We found one primus stove had no spanner and the spanner to the other one did not fit it: a proof that one should always attend to every tiny detail and leave nothing to the porters. I spent most of the day learning Tibetan. Our voices had practically gone with talking so much. It snowed hard in the afternoon and then blew a blizzard.

The next morning we were up at 6 to find a marvellous day: clear sky except for a wisp or two of cloud wreathing Kangchenjunga. I had slept very well once I got to sleep, but Cooke was breathing very queerly in the night, panting five or six times, then giving a great sigh; this is called Cheyne-Stokes breathing and is usual at high altitudes.

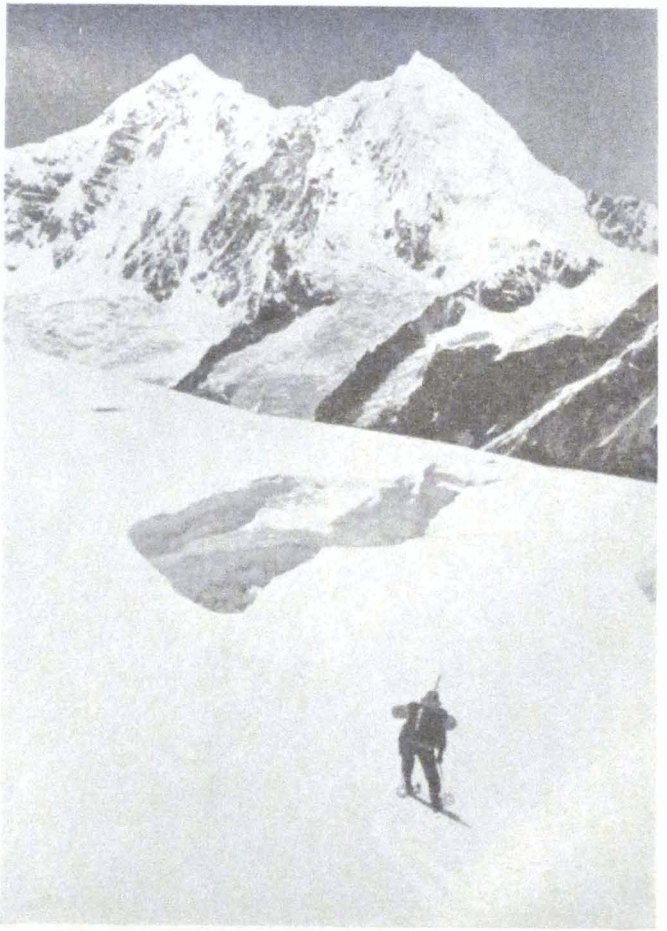
The primus gave trouble at breakfast so we were

not away till 7.30. The steep slopes at the top of the Upper Saddle would not be safe for a few days after the new snow, so Roaf, Cooke and I decided to ski up to the Simvu Saddle to see if there was a possible way up from there. We could see that the alternative route which we looked across to from the camp was steep and badly crevassed. We had a splendid trip; there were five inches of new powder snow and very few open crevasses and ice-falls; it was just a good steady climb with a splendid view across to the towering Tent Peak. The ascent looked almost impossible from this side, but the Twins seemed much more possible. We could see the Pyramid Peak over the Nepal Gap Glacier and thought it, too, looked possible and that we might attempt it when we went to Lhonak. From the top of the Saddle we looked straight down on to the Passanram Glacier, 2600 feet below. I cannot think how the Germans managed to force a way down there. Away beyond the glacier stretched the purple-shadowed valleys of Talung and the wooded hillsides of Sikkim.

The approach to the Upper Saddle was obviously impossible from here. Our ridge up to the north-east peak of Simvu looked difficult but not impossible. The difficulty would be to get on to it. We had a good view of the long north-west arête of Siniolchu leading up to the final needle which bristled with jagged gendarmes. Two griffon vultures sailed over the Saddle. We had a good run down to the camp,



CAMP AT UPPER SIMVU SADDLE.
SIMVU IN BACKGROUND



SKI-ING AMONG CREVASSES ON
SIMVU. TWINS IN BACKGROUND

though we were just an hour late as the snow was starting to get sticky. I think climbers underestimate the value of skis in the Himalaya. Roaf and I were the only ski-ers of the party and we gained tremendously. It is so much easier to maintain a rhythm on skis than on foot, and the delight of a good run down is ample recompense for any amount of slogging.

The others were taking loads towards the Upper Saddle. We noticed heavy solid-looking columns of cumulus cloud forming over the Pyramid Peak and a wisp of cloud on the Saddle. Soon after they had started it came on to snow and was soon blowing a blizzard and they had to find their way back to the camp by compass. Roaf came into our tent and we discussed the future of farming in England and read the whole of the Epistle to the Galatians aloud. I slept well that night but was rather cold. In the morning we had the usual trouble with the primus. We sat in the sun and breakfasted at 8 o'clock on boiled eggs and cheese and biscuits. Eggs needed six or seven minutes up here and tea had to be stewed for some time as the water boils far below 100° C. It was a hot, windless, cloudless day. We packed up everything and were away at 10. Small tortoise-shell butterflies kept on coming down from the Saddle. I counted 21 that morning, and one dark clouded yellow, and I also saw several vultures and a lammergeyer. Perhaps they use this route over to Lhonak and Tibet.

We ski-ed down from our moraine, then across the Simvu Glacier and up a long gradual climb to the ice-fall. It was absolutely no effort on skis, in spite of 40-lb. loads. We had special skis about 4 feet long and 6 inches wide with plush below for the porters but they resolutely refused to wear them; they will not try to learn anything new and preferred to carry them. We climbed well, zigzagging across with frequent rests. At midday it clouded over and became oppressively warm and we suffered from what is called 'glacier lassitude'. The sun, especially when shining through thin cloud, blazes up from the snow. Any part of the face that is exposed gets burnt in spite of Anti-Lux and other devices to protect the skin. One's lips and the edge of the nostrils suffer most, and usually these places are skinned and agonisingly raw after a few days on the glaciers. The application of grease of any sort merely makes the skin fry in the hot sunlight, though it can be put on safely at night.

The straps of our rucksacks cut into our shoulders and the weight of the load upset the balance in the most infuriating way. In spite of snow-goggles, our eyes ached and the glass misted up so that it was impossible to see. The snow was sticky and piled up on our skis; swing-turns were impossible, kick-turns were infinitely exhausting and life became a burden. Snow was pouring off all the couloirs on either side with a swishing, roaring noise. There was a fine view back to Siniolchu and Little

Siniolchu and across to the Sugarloaf, Twins, Nepal Peak, Tent Peak and Pyramid Peak. At 2 o'clock, clouds suddenly blew across from the north and we camped at once; and not a moment too soon, as it came on to blow and snow. We put up the four tents, having dug platforms for them just below some bad crevasses. The sun must have been terribly powerful; I had sore places behind the ears where I had forgotten to put any Anti-Lux; my beard protected my face, but my nose was sore and my lips painfully dry and cracked.

The weather soon cleared but the valley remained full of cloud. We had pemmican and tea for supper —it is extraordinary how important meals become on an expedition. There was a fine view in the evening down on to the billowy top of the clouds out of which the peaks rose grandly. The slanting sun lights up and reveals details not visible in the clear light of day; there was a queer violet reflection on the glacier, and flurries of snow-smoke blew across. A fiery glow lit up the western sky and deep purple and coppery shadows gave a strangely solid look to the rounded heads of cumulus: a cold, frightening, beautiful world.

We were away next morning by 8, only Roaf and I wearing skis. I carried 35 lbs. We roped up at the crevasses but found a safe way through. The lips of the crevasses curled over treacherously but the bridges seemed safe. The bare walls of ice showed irregular stratification, probably indicating the

amount of annual snow-fall; it was impossible to see to the bottom, just sinister blue and green shadows.

We were all past the crevasses by 11, when a sudden enveloping mist crept over the Upper Saddle from the south. What vile weather we had! I was ahead and went on till we came to a level place where we camped. All at once the mists swirled aside and we caught a momentary glimpse of Simvu towering majestically above us, and the amazing summit of Siniolchu away to the east with its south ridge now visible. It was a superb position, but I could not see how we were going to get on to the ridge of Simvu.

In the evening we held a council of war. Pallis favoured the ridge and two of us would go ahead and prospect it the next day. The porters were going well, with heavy loads on steep going. Roaf measured our hearts and pulses, tested blood-colouration and made us do intelligence tests. According to them, my brain certainly works better higher up. It snowed most of the afternoon. We seemed always to have had the best of the weather by 11 or 12, which made a very long night. Pemmican for supper with *tsamba* (*tsamba* is parched barley-meal; mixed with buttered tea it is the staple food of most Tibetans). I did not like the mixture. One is very conservative at 19,000 feet.

The next day was fine. There was a wonderful view down into Sikkim, with blue ridge paling into blue ridge and a bank of cumulus clouds in the

far distance. Frightful pinnacles showed on the Siniolchu ridge and on the Talung Peak which was just visible. Looking at Simvu, only ice and snow appeared, hardly any rock. Pallis and Nicholson set off to investigate the northern arête, Roaf and Cooke went down the route of the day before to collect various things we had left behind, and I took the three porters to find a new way down to the dump which Pallis and Nicholson had left three days before. I avoided the crevasses so that there would be no danger if the porters had to use it alone in the future. I went straight across the top of the ice-fall to the rocks, then over some big grey slabs and down a steep snow gully between the rocks and a frightful maze of crevasses. Two cols in the rock-ridge gave glimpses of the Zemu Glacier far below. We collected the loads and set off back at a break-neck speed. I kept in the rear. The porters decided when to stop and rest; I decided when to go on again. The mist blew over the col from Talung as we returned to camp. We could see Pallis and Nicholson now and then through the mist. They seemed to be making very little progress. Roaf and I had some most enjoyable ski-ing on a little snowy mound which lay to the east of our camp and was really an offshoot of the rocky mass separating us from the lower saddle. Running downhill was just the same as at normal altitude but one had to climb very slowly indeed. Pallis and Nicholson returned late in the evening with the news that they thought

we could force a way on to the ridge from the east.

What an age it took to do anything at that height! The primus wouldn't light, boots were frozen like iron, clothes took hours to pull on, and if one tried to hurry at all one lay back panting and exhausted. I slept with my boots in my sleeping-bag to keep them from freezing; but it is not worth the discomfort if one can afford time and fuel to thaw them out in the morning. One night I used them as a pillow, but then they were not only frozen but squashed flat and it took a quarter of an hour to thaw them out. The best thing is simply to bulge them out as much as possible and then leave them; once you can get your feet into them they soon get supple.

Our plan was for us all to go up and establish a camp at the foot of the arête, leaving Pallis, Nicholson and Cooke in one tent to try to force the ridge. Roaf and I were to return with the porters and come up again the next day. We did not get off till 10 o'clock; tatters of clouds were already blowing up from Talung and a heavy bank of cloud was settling down on the glaciers. We wore skis to begin with, then abandoned them and followed a difficult track between crevasses and below a formidable row of ice serracs, roping up over crevasses. At last a fairly level camp-site was found after we had plodded up through deep soft snow at a precarious angle. The whole place was dangerously overhung by the arête but the actual camp-site was on a small saddle and reasonably

OUR HIGHEST CAMP ON SIMVU

CLOUDS BREWING OVER KANGCHENJUNGA

likely to be clear of avalanches. We levelled a place for the tents and left the others at 3.30. There was a thick mist, but we managed to follow our tracks. Rinchen Sherpa was completely exhausted and Roaf had to steady him over the steep places. There was still no visibility when we reached the skis and we had a strange run down in the mist with crevasses suddenly appearing on either side. It is very difficult to ski when one is tired, especially in diffused light, and terribly difficult to get up again, once down.

For supper we scrambled some cracked eggs and made Ovaltine; I had a great craving for salad and smoked salmon; one's appetite became very capricious at this height.

We left one tent standing when we went up again the next morning. Ang Nima, Ang Babu and I were to stay up at the top camp, while Roaf was to take the two Rinchens back to this camp, sleep a night, then next day go the whole way back to the Base Camp. We were going to try the arête, and if we could force that we were going across the glacier to the west to attempt the second peak. We got away at 7 and reached the top camp at 12 and had brilliant sunshine all the way. We saw a great avalanche go down the north-east side of Simvu into the Talung Valley. It roared away down like thunder, and delicate white heads of snow-cloud were formed in its wake. Across the Passanram Glacier, just this side of Siniolchu, is a

remarkable needle of rock about a thousand feet high. It is quite unlike a Himalayan formation and closely resembles a Chamonix aiguille. From the top camp we could see down into the blue jungle of Sikkim and also away beyond the summits of the Nepal and Pyramid Peaks across to the snow-free uplands of Tibet. There were great rolling amber-coloured hillsides with dark violet shadows and only occasional patches of snow. The others had already returned when we reached the upper camp. They had cut steps up to 700 feet or so above the camp, then reached very steep dangerous snow overlying ice. They could work no further round to the left, and it was too steep to cut straight up to the arête, and impossible to traverse round to the right, so they had to return. Ang Nima was completely incapacitated by a violent headache, so he was to go down with Roaf and the Rinchens the next day, leaving only Ang Babu with us. I felt rather heavy behind the eyes (we were now at 20,000 feet) and my lips and nose were very sore but I was fairly cheerful and still full of energy. We spent a long time making tea for two thermos flasks so that Pallis and Cooke could get away very early and have one more attempt at the ridge, while Nicholson and I worked further over to the right. During the night it snowed again.

I slept well, though I once or twice awoke panting, with an awful feeling of suffocation caused by the lack of anything I could use as a high pillow. It is essential to get one's head as high as possible.

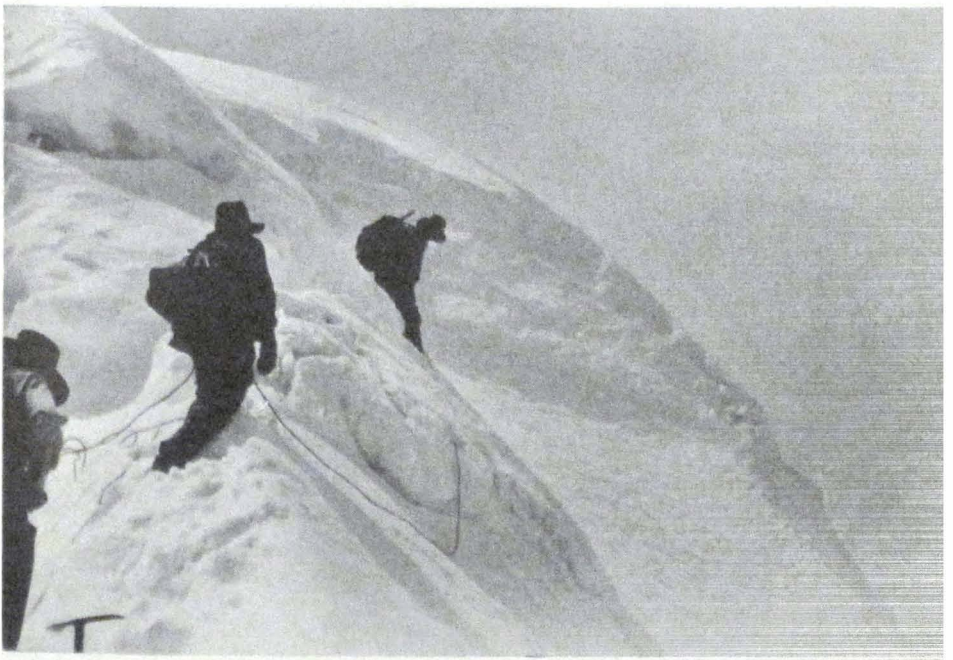
The next day Pallis and Cooke got away at 5.30, the right time of day to start, and Nicholson and I were off half an hour later. I wore my big felt-lined climbing-boots, three pairs of socks, puttees, woollen underclothes, grey flannel trousers with windproofs over the top, a flannel shirt, two thin jerseys and windproof jacket, Terai hat[1] and goggles, wool mitts and windproof outer gloves, and took with me a wool helmet and spare sweater. Pallis and Cooke cut across level with the camp until they reached very dangerous snow. Then they returned a short distance and traversed across again. Once more they were forced off the ridge. We caught them up just as they were making tea in a wind-sheltered hollow. From here I could see Roaf going down the glacier with the two Rinchens. After tea Nicholson and I traversed across beneath some vertical ice-falls and followed a narrow level ledge round a corner. From here it became apparent that we had discovered a possible way up. There seemed to be just one weak spot in the formidable defences of the mountain: if only we could get up an extremely steep nose of ice we could be on the arête. We returned for the others and they too thought it might be a possible way, and Pallis started cutting up it. It was a most horrible place, a vertical corner to be negotiated and then twenty feet of extremely steep ice which dropped at an

[1] The Terai hat is a double felt hat with a wide brim: it is worn by tea-planters.

increasing angle to the glacier below.

Pallis spent a long hour cutting both foot- and hand-holds up the corner. He was panting and groaning with the exertion. I watched Roaf still ski-ing down the glacier and felt more and more frightened lest I should completely fail to climb this formidable ice-wall. We all wore crampons, except Nicholson, who had left his behind. When at last I had to climb I found it very exposed and airy but not extraordinarily difficult. There were adequate steps, and it was simply a matter of control and balance, but for all that I should not have liked it much without the moral support of the rope. The glacier simply fell away beneath us. One was tempted to cling against the ice instead of standing well away from it and finding one's own balance. At last we were all on the bulging arête and it seemed as if the summit was ours. In front of us the ridge gradually rose to the final pyramid, nothing ahead of us appeared half as steep as what we had just done. We were all exultant and stopped in a sheltered hollow to eat sardines and prunes. Crystals of snow were forming in the air and gusts of wind blew up from the Talung Glacier. We hurriedly finished our meal and advanced up the ridge. If the weather kept fairly fine and our luck held, we should be able to reach the summit peak and return to the camp before dark. In any case there was a full moon. But it was not to be; we had advanced but a few yards when suddenly we saw

THE FOOT OF THE STEEP PITCH ON THE SIMVU RIDGE. NOTICE OUR HIGHEST CAMP IN BACKGROUND



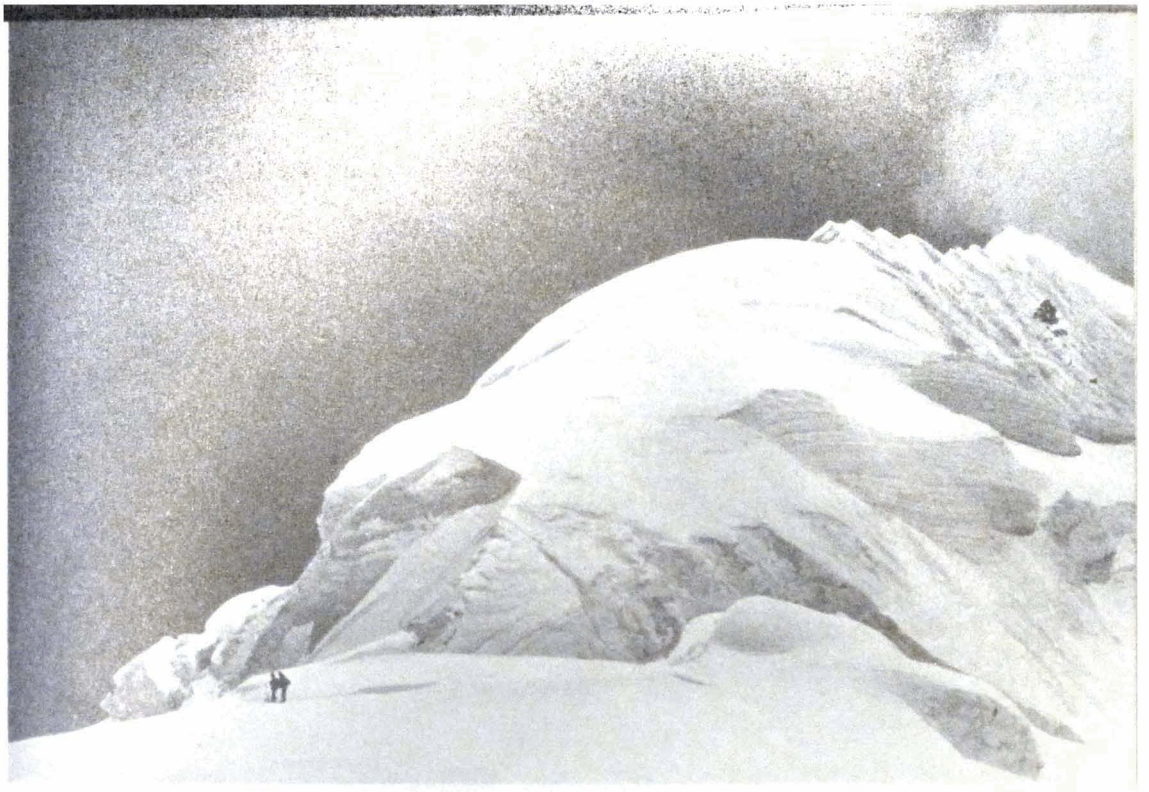
"HI! TAKE IN THE SLACK ON MY ROPE."
THE STEEP PITCH ON THE SIMVU RIDGE

to our horror that between us and the arête above there was a great gash right across the ridge; none of us had ever seen such a thing before; it was a huge crevasse or bergschrund 20 feet wide, 30 feet deep and open at each end. We examined every possible means of crossing it, then realised that there was no hope.

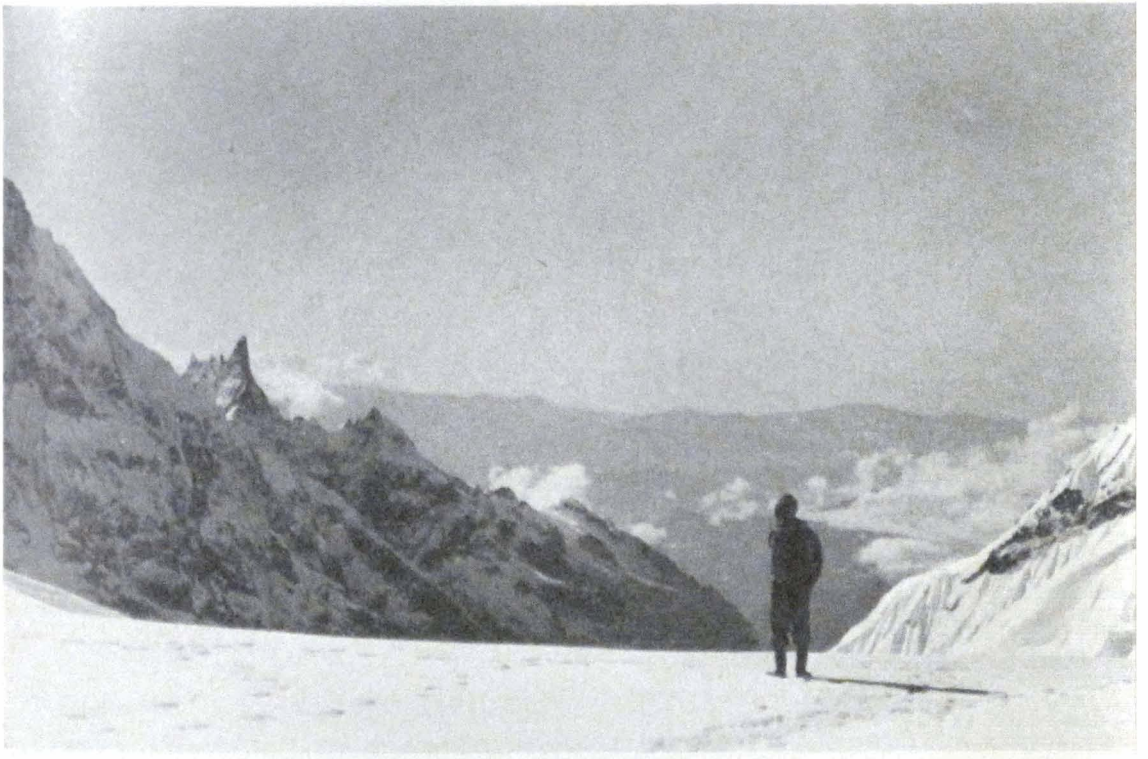
It started to snow as we returned and clouds formed rapidly. I could see Ang Babu watching us beside our two tiny tents perched among jagged serracs down below. It took us some time to negotiate the steep corner all on the same rope, weighed down, as we were, with a bitter sense of disappointment. I hated the climb coming down and leant in too far, with the result that one step broke under me; however, my axe held, and I was able to cut it out again. At last we got off this perilous place, and by the time we were back in camp it was snowing and blowing a blizzard. We decided to return to our Base Camp the next day. Simvu had won. Oddly enough we all felt vastly relieved. We were no longer in a state of suspense, and although it would have been more satisfactory to have got up, still, we had been turned back by a most unusual obstacle after a prolonged and not dishonourable siege. There was no talk of trying the second peak, though Cooke and I were very keen to attempt it. But we had not enough food, the weather was vile, and the party was not really up to it. Pallis still had a bad cough, Nicholson

had been suffering from headaches and it was Cooke's and my first climb at this height. It was obvious that we must return to the Base Camp and then decide on our next move.

Just as we were going to start breakfast the next morning there was a terrific thud and the whole tent floor shook as if there was an earthquake. I thought it was an avalanche starting above us and was expecting to be swept away into Talung at any moment; however, nothing happened, but when we got outside we saw a ridge of snow about twenty feet from the tent which had not been there before, and a crevasse, which had previously shown only as a warning hollow in the snow, had opened up to a great fissure several feet wide and many yards long. We soon packed up all our gear and in high spirits set off down the glacier. There was a feeling of tremendous relief in all of us. We could get off the mountain with a clear conscience. We passed the camp-site on the Upper Saddle, had a fine ski-run down the glacier, and soon reached the moraine camp where we left all the gear except our personal possessions and set off for the Base Camp. Most of the snow had gone from the moraine in our absence and it seemed that summer had come too. Birds were singing, butterflies flew past, and I found a minute pink primula and a red vetch in flower. Here we came upon a stream of melted snow water and had a long drink. At the Green Lake Ishwar Singh, Kipak and Roaf were waiting for us with the news



SIMVU. THE IMPASSABLE ABYSS LIES A SHORT DISTANCE BEYOND THE TWO FIGURES



LOOKING INTO THE TALUNG VALLEY FROM THE UPPER SIMVU SADDLE. SINIOLCHU ON LEFT, SIMVU ON RIGHT

that there were letters for us at the camp. Life seemed too good to endure. The Green Lake was thawing to a muddy pond, nearly all the snow had gone except on the north side of the moraine; everywhere birds were singing and insects flying about in the sunshine.

A very odd thing happened the next day. Jun Singh with the two Richens, Ang Nima and Kipak were sent across to the Simvu Glacier moraine to collect the rest of the gear. Soon after they had started, Jun, in his blue jersey, returned blubbering and staggering down the moraine. Apparently there had been terrible jealousy in our absence between Jun and the others. Having been with Pallis before, Jun gave himself airs and ordered them about. They did not mind Ishwar so much as he was older and had authority, though the Darjeeling men accused him of faking the accounts. Jun's explanation, between tears, was extraordinary: apparently the porters had decided that we would all die on the mountain, and Jun and Kipak agreed that when this happened they would settle a long-smouldering quarrel and fight until one of them was dead. Now, although we had all returned safely, Kipak was not going to be done out of his fight and had taken his revenge, although he had luckily stopped short of killing.

Then another remarkable thing happened. Looking down the glacier, we saw two figures approaching the camp without loads of any sort. As they got

nearer one turned and ran back, but the other, whom we soon recognised as Kilo, one of the youngest of the Darjeeling men whom we had paid off a fortnight before, came up grinning sheepishly and vigorously scratching his tousled hair with both hands, a habit of his when self-conscious. He produced some strange tale of a Sahib further down the glacier, and another Sahib having returned to Lachen after being taken ill, and Pallis went off with him to investigate.

Soon he returned with a tall young Englishman, one Jock Harrison, a subaltern in the Punjabis. Apparently he and a Captain Sams had started off together for the Zemu Gap but the latter had fallen ill and had had to return, so Harrison was left alone with an efficient little Sirdah and some Sherpa and Lachen porters. As will be seen in the next chapter, our meeting with him greatly simplified our somewhat complicated plans.

CHAPTER SIX

Plans and Complications

I HAD planned when the climbing was over to go across country to Shanghai, and then to return by Trans-Siberian railway to England. I had worked out a very interesting route by Manipur to Bhamo, then across the great river gorges to Yunnan-Fu, and down the Yangtse to Shanghai and had even gone so far as to get permission from the various Residents concerned. But at the beginning of April, when I was staying with Mr. Gould, the Political Officer in Sikkim, he called me into his office one morning and said, "I don't want to make any sort of promise, but if by any chance a job turned up in Tibet, would you be interested?" At any time there could be only one answer to such a question, and it happened that at that time I was very depressed because I had just heard that various plans I had made for the future before leaving England had gone completely awry, and I felt that there was nothing I would rather do than spend the rest of my life in the practically unknown country of Tibet.

It appeared that the last Dalai Lama, the priest-king of Tibet, had been a man of very advanced ideas, and had shown a high respect for European education. In 1920 he had actually sent four boys

to be educated in England. Mr. Gould, who was then British Trade Agent at Gyantse, had been responsible for taking them home, where they spent three years at Rugby School and elsewhere, and had since returned to Lhasa. The Dalai Lama had also supported the establishment of a school, run on British lines and with a British headmaster, at Gyantse, but owing to lack of support from the local Tibetans and the fact that the Lhasa families were reluctant to be without their children for so long a period, the school was abandoned in 1932, in spite of the efforts of Mr. F. Ludlow, the headmaster.

The last Dalai Lama had died in 1933, and those in power at Lhasa had not yet revealed their intentions, but the Government of India had told Mr. Gould that the Lhasa Government might ask him to reopen the school at Gyantse or to start one at Lhasa, and they had told him to look out for a likely headmaster. A man was needed who knew something about English educational methods and who would not find it intolerable to be the only European living in Lhasa.

This project was at that time both secret and indefinite, but Mr. Gould told me that he was going to Delhi in a few days' time and it was probable that the Government of India would be sending him up to Lhasa later on in the year should an invitation arrive from the Tibetan Government, and that he might be able to take me as his Private Secretary. Even if the school did not materialise, I would have

a chance of visiting the closed city of Lhasa and of seeing all sorts of new birds and plants on the way. I was wildly excited about this and could scarcely keep the good news from the others, but Mr. Gould had made me promise not to say anything to them until he had been to Delhi, when he would write to me and say how the land lay. Unfortunately it affected the expedition plans, in that I might have to join Mr. Gould before the expedition was over, in which case Cooke might be left in the lurch as far as our Lhonak arrangement was concerned.

On May 3rd, when we were just preparing to start up Simvu, Mr. Gould wrote to Pallis telling him that he had offered me a job and asking when I would be free. He also wrote in more detail to me: the Government had approved his suggestion and it now remained for the invitation to come from Lhasa. He would know better in a few weeks' time when we would actually be starting, but he wanted me to come to Sikkim and get used to the office work and also to start learning Tibetan. It seemed that the best thing was for me to go down to Gangtok as soon as we should get back from Simvu and then, if time allowed, to return and climb with Cooke in Lhonak before joining the Political Officer for good. If I could not get back again, then Nicholson would climb with Cooke, while Pallis and Roaf went to Tibet—if permission were forthcoming. But this plan was upset when Mr. Gould wrote to Pallis and told him that owing to the Kaulback incident and

for other political reasons he could not give him permission to enter any part of Tibet except to follow the normal trade route to Gyantse.

Here was a fantastic situation: Pallis, the leader of the expedition, who knew as much about the language and customs of the Tibetans as almost any man in Europe, was not allowed to enter the country, while I, who knew nothing whatsoever about Tibet, had been invited to go up to Lhasa itself. Pallis was violently opposed to the idea of starting a British school in Lhasa; thinking, as he did, that the Tibetan way of life and Tibetan culture were incomparably superior to Western civilisation, he considered it would be a most presumptuous act on our part to start teaching them how to live. It says something for Pallis' magnanimity that in these circumstances we still remained on the best of terms, even above 20,000 feet. Antagonisms, if they exist, working obscurely in the back of one's mind, can completely wreck a Himalayan expedition, and as, in my opinion, the conquest of a high peak is much more of a mental struggle than a physical one, a sub-conscious grudge might make all the difference to the success, and certainly to the enjoyment, of an expedition.

It was decided that as soon as we returned from Simvu, even if the others renewed the siege, I would make a flying visit to Gangtok to see Mr. Gould. The opportune appearance of Jock Harrison on May 19th took a great weight off my conscience, for it

meant that even if I had to stay at Gangtok, Cooke would be able to climb with Harrison and I would not have the feeling that I was letting him down. That night, after too large a meal, I was unable to sleep, and soon after midnight I went out to look at the stars. Cooke, who also could not sleep, heard me and crept out of his tent and we went for a walk down the moraine in the moonlight. Cooke was pleased to have a certain climbing companion for Lhonak, but three is a much better number than two and I agreed that if I possibly could I would join them, for we had already discovered that our ideas of how an expedition should be carried out were remarkably similar. Meanwhile they would return to Tsetang to recuperate, and if I did not appear after a reasonable interval they would set off for Lhonak without me.

On May 20th I got up at 5 to find hoar frost over everything, but it was a clear, cloudless morning full of promise. Everyone turned out to say goodbye, and I set off down the glacier feeling very forlorn and lonely. There is something very melancholy in parting with friends whom you have been camping and climbing with on an expedition.

But my sadness soon evaporated. It was a perfect morning and I determined to try to reach Lachen the same afternoon and to get the whole way to Gangtok on the following day. Actually this was a forlorn hope as I was in very poor condition after the climb and needed a rest, and the track from Lachen

to Gangtok is the longest fifty miles I know in the world; not only is there a general fall of 7000 and a climb of 4000 feet to the Penlong La, but the track twists and turns continually and the surface is very uneven. I was carrying only about 20 lbs., just my camera, sleeping-bag, a few extra clothes and some food. Looking back I could see the early morning sun turn the snows from delicate shell-pink to a hard and dazzling white. There was elegant Siniolchu, the immense mass of Kangchenjunga, the Twins and the formidable Tent Peak, against a foreground of dark, heather-clad moraine and patches of juniper scrub on the hillside above our camp. As I followed the stream beside the moraine I had to dodge from one side to the other. Soon it fell steeply and there was no more snow. I had some difficulty getting off the end of the moraine as it was very steep, and the precariously balanced stones were ready at the least touch to roll down to the bottom.

As soon as I got away from the glacier I was among azaleas and scarlet tamarisk flowers, and soon there were whole hillsides covered with pale yellow rhododendrons and occasional pink and white ones. At this altitude they were three or four feet high and covered the level part of the valley like a carpet. On either side great expanses of heathery ground led up to rocky pinnacles and alcoves full of snow. It was a glorious prospect, especially after the experiences of the last few weeks.

The track was elusive. Sometimes I followed the

bank of the Zemu Chu, only to be forced to the undergrowth when the stream entered a gorge. When I was two hours out from the camp I reached the pine trees and suddenly I came upon a mass of deep claret-coloured *primula Royalei* and a few minutes later I saw a blue poppy, my first, a most beautiful thing, with its clear sky-blue petals and yellow sepals, *mecanopsis simplicifolia*, not *Baileyi*.

The track led on to various marshy clearings where the going was easy, but the path was nearly always lost on the far side. I wasted a great deal of time searching for the track in such places. How different all this seemed from the journey up! It was winter when I had last passed that way, now it was full spring.

At 10 o'clock I crossed the bridge over the Lhonak Chu and saw the track winding up to Talung. When I reached a fork in the track I was not sure which way to go, so I took the upper route and climbed up to the edge of the trees again. Soon I reached Tsetang, the clearing with the lichen on the pine trees. Once again I was conscious of the strangeness and beauty of the place, with the delicate banners of green swaying in the wind like seaweed floating from the timbers of a wreck.

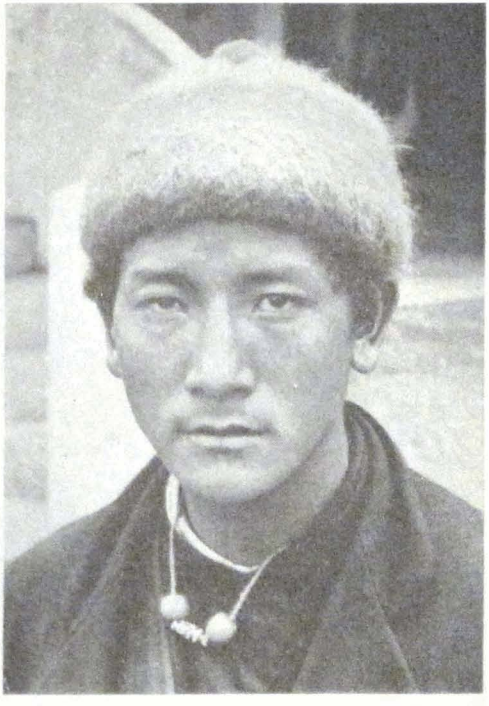
The next stretch was very laborious; I worked my way through tangled rhododendron thickets until I found the tree-trunk bridge, which I crossed gingerly on all fours, for the torrent had increased with the melting snow-water. I often followed a

path till it lost itself in the forest, and then had to fight my way through until I came on to another track. As I went lower the heat of the forest became oppressive, and I stripped to my shirt. At last, soon after midday, I met the Tangu La track and crossed to Zemu Ram. I walked very fast along the good track and reached Lachen at 1 o'clock.

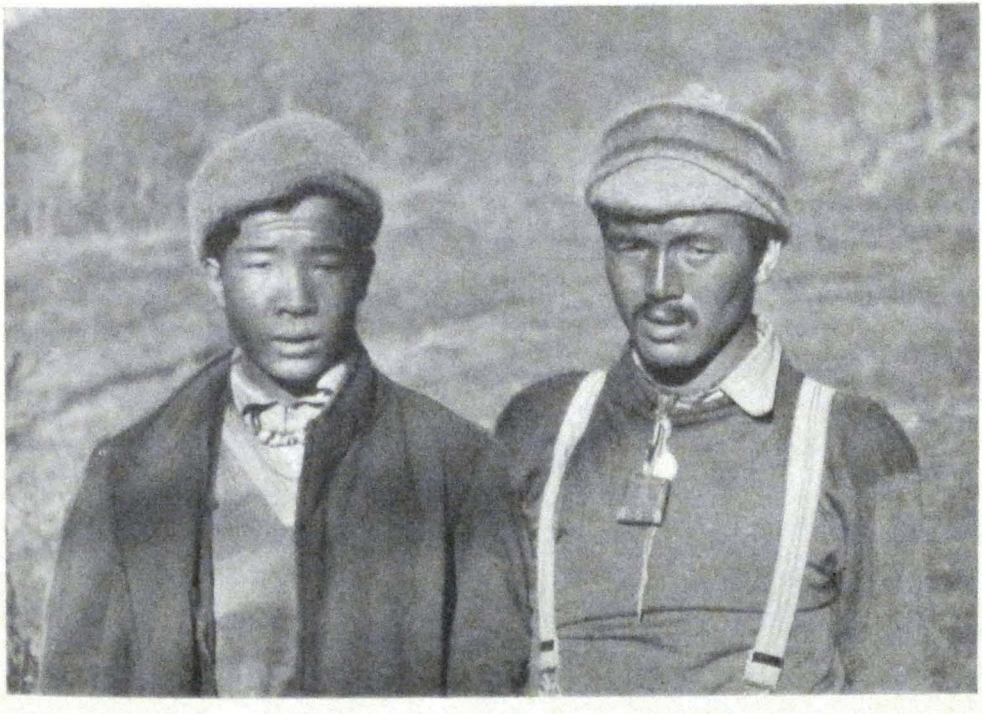
On the way down I had felt ill, and so had eaten nothing, but now I was ravenous and ordered six boiled eggs and some tea from the man in charge of the dak bungalow. Lachen, also, seemed quite different from what it had been a month before; it was strange and impersonal then, but now it seemed familiar and homely; the air was warm and fragrant, the people smiled as they passed. Later in the evening, when I returned to the bungalow after a visit to the headman, I found two Englishmen there, Waller and Acaster. They had been up to the Dongkya La and had tried to cross it with yaks, but two feet of new snow had defeated even these hardy beasts and they had been forced to turn back. I had a good supper with them and was delighted to have real bread and jam again and, above all, the luxury of a hot bath.

On May 21st a few late stars were still shining when I left Lachen at half-past four. The brain-fever bird was already noisy in the fir trees above the village, and choughs were calling querulously to each other. Near some outlying chalets I sur-

PHINTZU



KIPAK



RINCHEN SHERPA AND ANG NIMA

prised a party of langurs who were digging up potatoes in the fields. On this winding stony track I found I could only just keep up four miles per hour, even running down all the hills.

It was not until 8 o'clock that I reached the barley fields of Chungtang. It grew unbearably hot as the path took me down and down, and my gym shoes started to fall to pieces on the rough, cobbled track. Once I stopped to eat some delicious yellow raspberries and discovered a leech on my fingers and found the disgusting creatures crawling all over me. At 1 o'clock I reached Singhik and after a meal of tea and eggs—all I could ever procure at the bungalows, where they do not normally provide food—I lay exhausted on the verandah of the bungalow with aching muscles and blistered feet. I realised I could not get to Gangtok that day. I could have carried on down to the malaria-infested bungalow at Sikchu, but would not have had the strength for the long climb over the Penlong La to Gangtok.

The garden of the bungalow at Singhik was some compensation for staying. All along the verandah were tree orchids swaying in wire baskets, and in the garden were sweet-scented camellias, trim orange trees, roses, the long trumpet-flowered bush, and masses of magenta bougainvillaea. There is much competition among the bungalow-keepers to produce the best garden. After the usual tea and eggs I read an old *Illustrated London News* that I found

there and went to sleep early, feeling rather lonely in the empty house.

At 4.30 next morning I was on the road again; my feet were terribly blistered and I could hardly move at first, but it was an exquisitely fresh morning and I soon livened up. There is something very inspiriting in the early morning fragrance of the jungle, before the fierce sun and heat have liberated the ranker smells of midday. It seemed a very long way to Mangan, and walking downhill was most painful. I found it much more comfortable in my gym shoes to keep to the muddy border beside the track and avoid the hard uneven cobbles. At last I reached Dikchu at 8.30 A.M. and had some more tea and eggs. The man in charge told me that Captain Sams—Harrison's partner, who had been taken ill—had been at Dikchu the night before, going down to Gangtok on a litter. After breakfast I lay back in a deck-chair to rest and noticed blood running out of the back of my gym shoe. On investigation I found nineteen leeches on one foot alone. I had picked them up as my legs brushed against the grass while walking in the soft track beside the path. It was such a revolting sight that I did not dare to examine the other leg. There is nothing more loathsome than to see bloated leeches staggering drunkenly away from one, leaving a track of blood on which the flies cluster.

I left Dikchu bungalow at 9.30 and reached the top of the Penlong La after four hours of climbing.

It rained hard on the way and I enjoyed getting soaked to the skin. All the Nepalis and Babus I passed on the road stared hard at me; they must have thought me a very low-caste sahib, for it is rare to see a sahib on foot at all, and his worth is judged by his clothes and the number of servants he has with him. An hour later I was climbing the steep path through the Residency garden and wishing I were a little less disreputable. There I found Mr. Gould, also Colonel Bailey, the well-known naturalist-explorer who was at that time British Resident at Katmandu, the capital of Nepal. A few years before that he had been Political Officer of Sikkim. There also was Miss Audrey Harris, whom I had last met at a cocktail party in London, and the genial Rajah Tobgay Dorje, a Bhutanese who is the connecting link between the P.O. Sikkim and the Maharajah of Bhutan. His charming wife, Ranee Chuni, a sister of the Maharajah of Sikkim, was with him. I had met them both at Kalimpong where they have a house; they both speak perfect English and are as delightful a couple as one could meet.

After a bath I was provided with an old grey suit which H. W. Tilman, of Everest and Nanda Devi fame, had worn only the day before when it was found that his climbing clothes were also too disreputable for the Residency. Tilman had called in to make arrangements for visiting the Zemu Gap from the west, before joining the rest of the Nanda

Devi party. Later in the afternoon the Maharajah of Sikkim arrived, and then General Sir Douglas Baird with Brigadier Philip Neame, V.C., who was to accompany the Lhasa Mission—if it materialised—as military adviser. At dinner, having borrowed some of the P.O.'s evening clothes, I had to start my duties as Private Secretary by helping to entertain the company. It seemed incredible to be sitting there in a dinner-jacket making small-talk to Generals and Maharajahs after the vicissitudes of the last few weeks, or even of the last few days. The P.O. told me that he would not really need me until the beginning of June and that we would start for Lhasa at the end of July. So I decided to stay two more days at Gangtok and then take advantage of his offer of a pony and return to Lachen as quickly as I could and join Cooke and Harrison before they reached Lhonak.

The same day a present of two beautiful cloisonné jars arrived from the Tashi Lama, who was up near Jyekundo on the borders of Tibet and China. It appeared that the Tibetans were in a very difficult position and would almost certainly invite the P.O. up to Lhasa to give them the advice of the Government of India. The late Dalai Lama had died in 1933 and the next incarnation had not yet been found. The Tashi Lama, the next most holy of the lamas who are the ruling force in Tibet, had quarrelled with the Dalai and had fled to China. The Tibetans implored him to return, as the

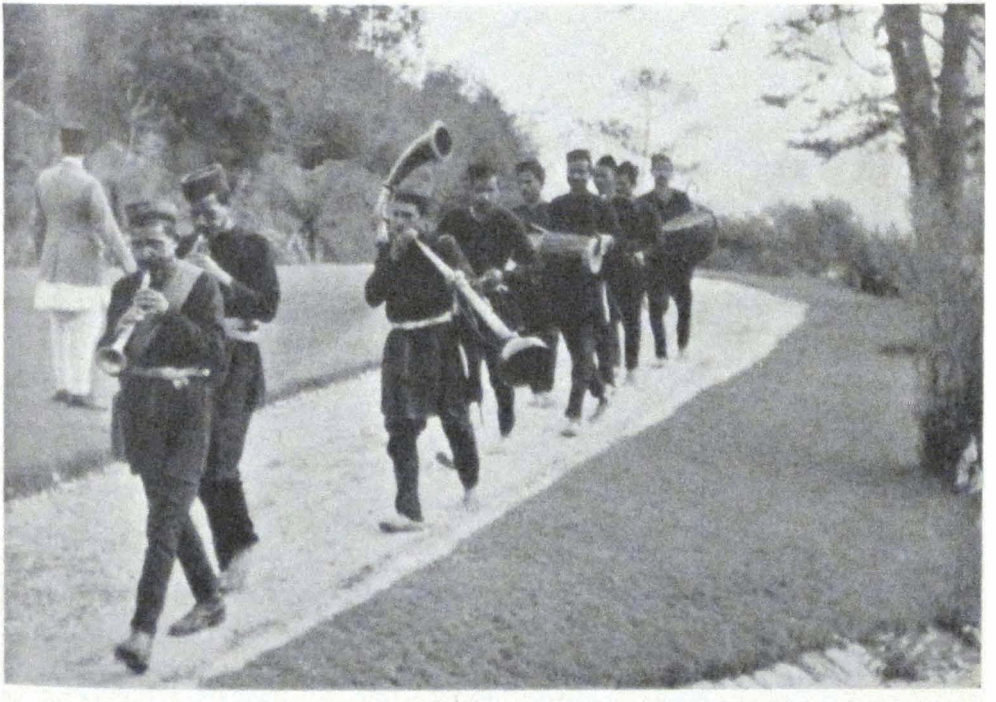
spiritual life of the country was crippled in the absence of the two highest lamas. But the Tashi, perhaps fearing for his personal safety, would only return if he was allowed to bring with him an escort of Chinese soldiers, and the Tibetans, having had bitter experience of the treachery of the Chinese, and fearing another foreign domination of Lhasa, refused to allow this escort into Tibet. There was just a chance that both parties might agree to the Political Officer's going up to Jyekundo and escorting His Serenity back to Lhasa. The future was full of exciting possibilities.

Next day there was a garden party at the Residency. That was a most remarkable spectacle. By way of entertainment, music was provided by the local talent. First there was a Nepali band: all the performers were dressed in tight-fitting black suits like professional skaters, and one played an enormous trumpet which curled round his body and emitted the most fearful noises. Then there was a Sikkimese Band: these men wore the uniform of the old Sikkimese militia which is now used by the servants of the P.O. and the Maharajah of Sikkim and which consists of a short scarlet jacket with black facings, a striped home-woven skirt, puttees and bare feet. The hair is worn in a long pigtail, and on top of the head is a wickerwork hat with a bunch of peacock feathers at the side. The chief feature about this band was a drum which was carried on the back of one man and beaten by another who

marched behind him. Then there was a smart drum and bagpipe band played by the Gurkha police in green uniforms. Finally there were five serious-looking Tibetans who stood in a line on a wood plank and performed a solemn dance and sang a quiet broken little song, while a brigand-like Tibetan kept time with a strange stringed instrument. The men wore wide scarlet hats tasselled like lamp shades, and long homespun robes. Another group did a dance arm-in-arm which was the very image of the Palais Glide. The four other white residents of Gangtok were there as well as all the Kazis, or high Sikkimese officials, dressed in magnificently coloured silk robes. Then the brother of the Maharanee arrived, having just come down from Lhasa where he had an official post. He wore in his left ear the single six-inch-long turquoise and gold ear-ring, the badge of office of all Tibetan officials. His hair, instead of being in a long pigtail, was tied up with red ribbon into two buns on the top of his head, with a coral and turquoise charm-box between them. He was a very distinguished-looking young man with a pale complexion and fine, rather effeminate, features. The party was a great success. After tea and ices, decorations were presented to two Sikkimese officials, and the entertainment was over.

In the evening we all went down to the Maharajah's palace for dinner. His house is a curious mixture of the old and the new; the dinner was European and quite excellent, but the furniture was largely Tibetan,

SIKKIMESE BAND AT THE GARDEN PARTY



NEPALI BAND AT THE GARDEN PARTY

and there was a set of very beautiful *thankas* or Tibetan holy paintings. After dinner, the Maharajah showed us some films he had taken of this year's Everest party, Colonel Bailey ran through some of Bhutan and Nepal and I finished up with some of Greenland.

On May 25th I left Gangtok for Lhonak. The P.O. had so many guests at the Residency that he could not spare one of his own ponies, but he produced a minute white beast from the village, also a Nepali groom on a brown pony, and a coolie for my rucksack. I managed to slip out by the back gate, avoiding the Nepali band which was at the front door waiting to give the General—not me—a suitable send-off. We made good progress though my saddle, being a native one, made me terribly sore. The coolie with the rucksack held on to the horse's tail and kept up even when we were galloping. We reached Singhik that night and I was so saddle-sore I could hardly move. When we got to Chungtang next day I went to the post office and bought all the stamp paper available and stuck it on to my seat, which was rapidly becoming completely skinned. Unfortunately, post-office gum cannot be very antiseptic and it was some time before I could sit down with any comfort.

On horseback I was much more conscious of the way the path overhung the river. The ponies are used to carrying loads and they walk on the very outside of the track to allow for an imaginary pack.

In the afternoon I reached Lachen and was delighted to see two of our green Base Camp tents on the field below the bungalow. Pallis, Nicholson and Roaf were there, having arrived from Tsetang only an hour or two before, and they told me that Cooke and Harrison had set off that very day for Lhonak, having given up waiting for me.

I spent most of May 27th at Lachen as I had to wait until the expedition reserve supply of boxes could be unpacked before collecting my gear together. I helped Pallis to pay off the Lachen men who had brought all the equipment down from the Base Camp. It is melancholy to see what a demoralising influence the passage of several large expeditions has had on the inhabitants of Lachen. In the first place, seeing sahibs apparently possessing boundless wealth and giving away or discarding articles of value along the route, they have entirely lost their sense of values. The Lachen men, knowing that no other local man-power is available, expect twice as much wages as porters in other localities, and worse than that, they make an agreement, then under various pretexts refuse to carry on unless the wages are increased. They will also try to curtail each day's march by stopping about midday and declaring that there is no fuel further on, or no possible camp-site ahead. Then they try to shout down any opposition from their sahibs, relying on their superior knowledge of local conditions. Yet they are thoroughly good fellows at heart and

excellent porters. We have only ourselves to blame if they have been corrupted.

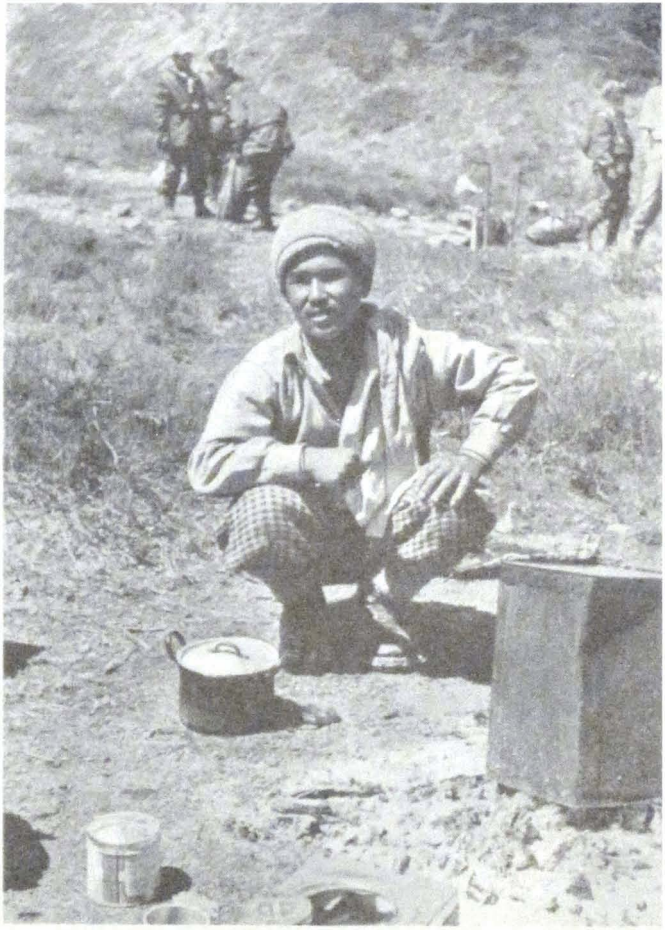
After paying the men we were invited up to the headman's house, which was a very fine one with stables on the ground floor in which the cows and horses were kept, and wooden balconies above. The painted carving round the windows and doors was especially beautiful. There was even glass in the upstairs windows instead of the more usual cloth stretched over a trellis-work of wood. The living rooms on the first floor were entered by an outside staircase. On the balcony skins of sheep and goats were drying. The main living-room was also the private chapel of the house; one complete wall was occupied by a high painted and carved shrine in front of which were rows of holy water vessels and an incense burner, and there were also racks for holy books, and several fine *thankas* hanging on the wall. On low carved wooden tables were china tea-cups on high beaten silver saucers and with beautifully carved lids. There was a plate of *tsamba* (barley meal), a dish of puffed rice and another of cakes made from maize meal. A man-servant brought tea in a copper and silver tea-pot. The moment we drank any the cup was filled up again: luckily it is the custom to leave the cup full, or the process would be interminable. Tibetan tea is very different from what we call tea in Europe. In the first place the leaves come down from China in compressed bricks containing stalks and all kinds of impurities.

The leaves are boiled for a considerable time and then the infusion is mixed with salt, soda and butter. This is poured into a section of hollow bamboo and churned up with a plunger. As long as it is drunk hot, and as long as the butter is fresh, it is an excellent drink. It is better still if one can forget that one is meant to be drinking 'tea'. At the end of a long day spent in the cold there is nothing better than buttered tea with a handful of barley meal stirred into it.

This was only a preliminary to the meal, and soon a big shallow bowl of beautifully boiled rice was brought to each of us, an omelette, a bowl of curried potatoes and meat, and a bowl of spinach and meat. We found chopsticks rather difficult to manipulate, but it was quite easy once we got the knack. It was as good a meal as one could have had anywhere. Our host wore his long ear-ring of office, a superb violet brocade robe held in with a scarlet sash and high black boots ornamented with green appliqué work. The effect was spoilt by the addition of a ghastly cheap European felt hat with a band of gold brocade round it.

After this meal I said goodbye to the others. Their plans were still undecided. They might return to England or go up to Gyantse, or visit the Gangotri district where Pallis and Nicholson had been in 1933. I left Lachen at 3.30 with Rinchen Sherpa and Kipak. I also took one Lachen man who went on ahead to Tsetang where we intended

LACHEN HEADMAN AND FAMILY



JUN SINGH, THE COOK

to spend the night, and an extra tent and food and gear to eke out what Cooke and Harrison would already have. It took us four hours in thin rain to reach Tsetang, where I found the Lachen man sitting in a primitive shelter stripped to the waist in front of a huge fire. The porters boiled up a great dish of dried mutton, putting in lumps of red marsala bean, and each produced a leather bag of *tsamba* and mixed it with tea to make a sort of dough cake which tasted very good. They were all very cheerful and the Lachen man seemed to be rather a wag.

Next day I woke the others at 6 o'clock and made porridge. They had the same meal as on the evening before, so it was 8 o'clock before we got away. We went straight up the hill from here, following a fair track. As we got higher the flowers were wonderful. There was a delicate green fritillary spotted with magenta, and all kinds of new primulas, poppies and saxifrages. Higher up the rhododendrons were even better than those I had seen beside the Zemu Chu. The whole mountain-side was a blaze of colour, from pure waxy white blooms to the deepest of scarlet. There was a small dark-leaved bush covered with huge saffron-coloured flowers, and one with enormous trumpets of the softest shell-pink, another the colour of lilac, another bright crimson. The most lovely of all had long thin trumpets, vermilion-flame at the base, shading irregularly to orange.

We soon rose above the trees and followed a deep

valley with a furious rushing torrent in the bottom of it. I found I was perfectly acclimatised and could walk just as fast as at sea-level. I talked to the porters as we went along and learnt new Tibetan words. At midday we found a small lake surrounded by sandy bays and rested there in the sun while the porters lit a fire and made the inevitable tea. On each side steep rhododendron-covered hills ran up to bold rock peaks flecked with snow silhouetted against a deep blue sky. Soon after we had passed the lake the valley widened out and we had to cross the torrent. I managed to get over first, then I found a place for the porters to cross after hauling the loads up a vertical ten-foot wall of rock with a yak-hair rope. Not long after this the track became more distinct and the valley opened out on to a wide grassy plain. This might have been an entirely different country from the Zemu; ahead of us was a vast open rolling plateau quite clear of snow, the ground an amber brown colour, dotted with black grazing yaks, and beyond that the level grassland. This happy valley was surrounded by bare rounded hills leading up to a distant circle of snowy peaks. Halts became more frequent, although the path ceased to rise so sharply, and at 4 o'clock we reached a level grassy place and the men were very anxious to camp. I had hoped to get right on to Lhonak, but gave in on condition that we should get away really early in the morning. I had agreed with them on a definite wage for the

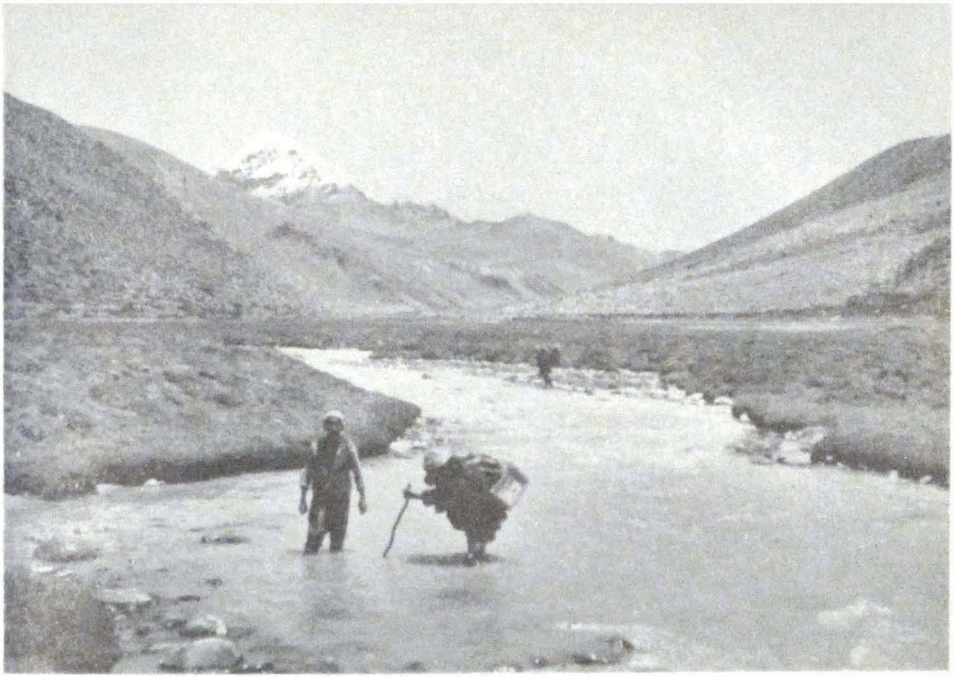
whole trip (4 rupees from Lachen to Lhonak and back), so they were less anxious than usual to stop before half the day's journey was done. I had been terribly itchy all day, so I had a hunt in my sleeping-bag and on my clothes, where I found 14 fleas, 5 ticks and 2 leeches, and was very gratified that there were no lice. I suppose I collected this assortment while sitting in the shelter at Tsetang the night before. The porters cooked rice and mutton, then tea and *tsamba*. We all went to sleep early.

On May 29th I got up at 6 o'clock, but as the porters insisted on cooking rice and mutton again, it was 8 o'clock before we started. It was a bleak and windy morning but the sky was clear. We passed many beautiful patches of the claret-coloured primula and smaller rhododendrons and azaleas. Up here they were only a foot or so in height, but all the more beautiful for that, after the almost excessive exuberance of the lower valleys. There was also a minute blue gentian growing beside the path, a yellow ranunculus and a scarlet vetch. It distressed me very much that I could not put a name to all these plants, but I made a collection of all I found and, though they suffered from the damp as we returned through the forest, they eventually reached Kew Herbarium, when they were identified.

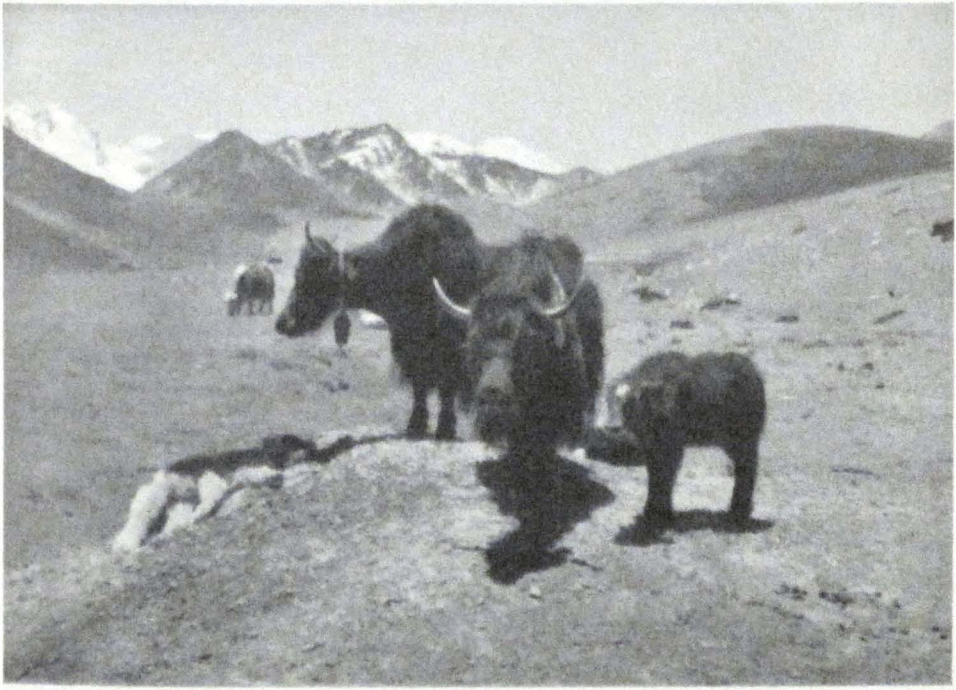
A considerable descent brought us to the river, a pale-emerald glacier torrent running between rust-coloured rocks and steep grassy banks dotted with dark patches of juniper scrub. We then crossed the

branch stream coming in from Chomiomo and the north. It was over knee-deep and we had to hold on to each other to avoid being swept off our feet. A track followed this stream by which one could cross the Lungnak La to Tangu. We followed the main river, now the Langpo Chu, westward until we came out on to a parched stony plain, which nevertheless seemed to afford some pasturage here, for great herds of yaks and sheep appeared ahead. Soon we saw a crowd of men approaching us; these were the twelve Lachen men that Cooke and Harrison had taken up to their camp. They told us we still had about five miles to go, and as it was midday by then we went across to some yak-herds' shelters to make tea. Near by were two solid dome-shaped buildings of stone and sods, about eight feet high, presumably of some religious significance. In a rough stone shelter was a shepherd looking after a motley flock of brown and white sheep. His face was burnt almost black by the sun, and his tousled hair was tied into innumerable tiny plaits which united to form a thick pigtail, heavily ornamented with silver rings, coral and turquoise. He had a heavy gold ear-ring in one ear and a plain piece of turquoise in the other. As he walked he was spinning a thread from a roll of yak hair round his wrist. On his back was a six-stringed fiddle.

We made a fire, and a large bowl of yak's milk was produced. It had a sweet and smoky flavour, but was very good. We also bought a hollow



CROSSING A RIVER IN LHONAK VALLEY



YAKS IN LHONAK

bamboo full of curdled yak milk which was very similar to Icelandic *skyr*. I ate some of this, though the Lachen man indicated that it would make me giddy. While we were eating, a man passed on his way to Tangu. With him was an enormous black Tibetan mastiff, very superior and stand-offish. The man was driving four yaks which were heavily laden with bags of butter and were literally festooned with prayer flags tied to branches of bamboo. They also had scarlet tassels hanging from their ears. Many of the yaks here had calves which grunted like pigs and scampered round like excited dogs. The people accepted chocolate and biscuits but never ate them in my presence. One yak-herd was sewing a yak-hair boot-sole as he walked, using a very practical cylindrical thimble with slots in it for the needle head. They nearly all have very finely worked brass plaques, not unlike the old-fashioned horse-brasses, about three inches in diameter, hanging from their belts.

A little further on we could see the La which runs southward straight over to the Zemu Glacier, but our way led still westward over a spur leading into another wide valley where we could make out the black hair tents of the yak-herds. Their real home is the Chang Tang, the high central plateau of Tibet; they only come down here for the summer. The porters wanted to stop and said it was too far to the camp. However, I took the load of the Lachen man, who was grumbling most, and offered the

others an additional rupee if we reached the camp that night. The Lachen man was then furious and wanted to take his load back, but I would not give it to him.

We crossed the Langpo Chu, over knee-deep again, and visited a big yak-hair tent built up on sods. There were two very aged but friendly women inside. They gave me some yak milk and *tsamba*. I stirred the meal into the milk with one finger, in proper Tibetan style. It was excellent. There was an open fire of yak-dung fuel in the middle of the tent and bundles of wool and striped bags of *tsamba* all round. I gave the old women some tobacco and they seemed very pleased. Soon after this I saw the green tents of Cooke's Base Camp at the junction of the Langpo Chu and the Podong Chu. It was at an altitude of 16,000 feet in a beautiful place which was entirely different in character from the Zemu Base Camp. I shouted as we approached the tents and soon Kilo emerged, scratching his tousled head, and said vaguely that the sahibs had gone off for ten days up the valley. It was essential that I should find them at once before they got too far away, so I put my sleeping-bag in a rucksack, took some food with me and set off in the direction Kilo indicated. Rinchen Sherpa, who had been going extremely well all day, asked if he could accompany me and carry the rucksack, so I put his sleeping-bag and more food into it and we set off at once. I intended to sleep at their camp if we found it, and

if not, to return to their Base Camp. It was then 6 o'clock and would soon be dark.

I followed the hill to the south of the Langpo Chu, then crossed an awkward moraine and descended into the wide horse-shoe valley of the Langpo Chu and climbed a rocky hill which dominates the valley. From here there was a superb view from the Tent Peak round to the Pyramid and Langpo Peaks and back to the graceful Fluted Peak a short distance to the north. I yodelled and yodelled but there was no reply, nor could I see their tents. By this time it was dark and Rinchen, who had been going very slowly, was nowhere in sight. It was a beautiful night with a half moon and clear stars. I thought that I might see the lights in their tents when it got darker, so I sat on top of this hill waiting for Rinchen. He did not appear, however, and I got rather tired of "chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon" and returned to the Base Camp, getting there at 10 o'clock. Rinchen was not there, but I was not much worried, because it was a wonderful night and he had both sleeping-bags with him and plenty of food.

It was cold without a sleeping-bag, so I got up as soon as it was light and set off with Kilo to find the camp. It soon became clear that he had been up there already and knew the way perfectly: it was only laziness that had prevented him coming up with me the evening before. I realised once again that one cannot get the most out of porters unless one can

speak Tibetan. The going was very easy, first up a grassy hillside where a deep violet primula was in full bloom and cushions of androsace with white or forget-me-not blue flowers. We then reached some stony ground where there were several lakes. I had come this way on the night before but then had kept level, whereas Kilo went up over a stony moraine where we soon found their tents, only 1½ hours from the Base Camp.

I yodelled loudly and they tumbled out of their sleeping-bags vastly surprised to see me after having quite given me up. It was good to see the grinning faces of Ang Nima and Ang Babu again, and Harrison's busy little Darjeeling sirdar. After eggs and bacon with them, I returned to the Base Camp as I had not brought up any gear, being ignorant of their plans, and I was rather worried about Rinchen. Meanwhile they were to go on and prospect the approaches to the Pyramid Peak, which was our immediate objective. After that the plan was to attempt the Fluted Peak, the graceful mountain I had seen the night before, and finally to visit the almost unknown district to the north towards the Chorten Nima La.

When Kilo and I reached the Base Camp at 10 o'clock there was still no sign of Rinchen. I did not think it possible that he could have lost himself, but set off to search, thinking that he must have sprained an ankle in the dark. The four of us started out in different directions, but the other three soon returned

saying that a snow man (*mi-go*) had got him and it was no good looking for him. Although this seemed the only possible explanation, I once again climbed my look-out hill blowing a whistle as I went. I reached the top camp again anxious for their advice, but found they had already moved up to the glacier. By the time I returned to the Base Camp I was extremely worried and tired, but there, thank goodness, was Rinchen. It was difficult to follow his story, but apparently he had gone right over the hill to the south-east and, finding himself alone in the darkness, had lost his head and started wandering in circles. Then, according to the others who took up the story, he had been overcome by fear of encountering a snow man and had wept and started hurling himself about among the stones. He was thus engaged, apparently, when Kilo found him a few miles from the camp; it was a very mysterious tale and I still do not feel that I got to the bottom of it.

By 3 o'clock I was ready to start up to the top camp again, but then it was discovered that Rinchen had left my ice-axe and the rucksack containing the sleeping-bags somewhere up in the hills, he did not know where. This was very serious indeed as I could not possibly go any further without a sleeping-bag. I went in the direction where Kilo had found Rinchen and after an hour's search succeeded in finding the rucksack and ice-axe about two miles from the camp; the sleeping-bag had not been used

but most of the food had been eaten. By the time I reached the camp again it was 6 P.M. and clouds were low over the hills. I paid off my three porters and was not sorry to see the last of Rinchen Sherpa.

Kilo and I left for the upper camp at 6.30. When we reached the moraine it came on to snow hard and there was no chance of finding the new camp, so we put up in the small tent I had brought with me. As we had relied on reaching the others' camp we had only emergency rations with us and no stove to warm ourselves. It is only when one shares a minute tent with an overheated Sherpa that one becomes aware of the fact that they do not believe in washing and that garlic forms a considerable part of their diet. Although I had walked the better part of a hundred miles in the last 48 hours I found it very difficult to get any sleep. It snowed all night, but the clouds lifted in the morning though it was still dull. Kilo and I left our tent at dawn and followed the barely discernible trail of Cooke and Harrison, and reached their camp just in time for breakfast. We were now all ready for our attempt at the Pyramid.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Pyramid and the Sphinx

THE Pyramid is a cone-shaped mountain, 24,000 feet high, on the long ridge that runs from the Talung Peak to the Langpo Peak; this ridge dips down to 20,000 at the Langpo La and rises to an unnamed mountain of 23,500 which we called the Sphinx, and again to the summit of the Pyramid before running southward past the Tent Peak to the great mass of Kangchenjunga. So far as I know the Pyramid had never previously been attempted by any climbing party.

It was on Sunday, May 31st, that I joined the others at Camp 2 on the Upper Lhonak Glacier in the shadow of the formidable-looking wall of the Langpo La. It snowed steadily all that day and I was glad of the rest and a chance to acclimatise after my recent exertions. We spent a very pleasant day, eating, sleeping, reading and doing a *Times* crossword puzzle. Harrison, being used to the ways of the East, had his cook-sirdar, Marn Bahadur, extremely well trained. We lay comfortably in our sleeping-bags and, in answer to our shouts, cups of tea and excellent meals appeared as if by magic. Pallis had such a horror of reducing his servants to a state of servility that he erred in the other

direction and spoiled them unreasonably.

Four or five inches of new snow fell during the day and avalanches were continually roaring down the semicircle of steep rock and ice slopes which encloses the Upper Lhonak Glacier. Some of these avalanches were near enough to shake our tent, and occasionally there would be rending and explosive noises from the belt of crevasses near our camp. Cooke and Harrison had chosen this site in diffused light and not until one of them put his foot through a frail bridge was it discovered that they had started to pitch their tent right over a hidden crevasse. The three of us were sleeping in one tent and there was very little room to move, especially as drifts of new snow had piled up against the sides. A thin spray of snow came from the ventilator at the top until we blocked it up with a sock. Mahn Bahadur, Ang Nima, Ang Babu and Phintzu (one of Harrison's Sherpas) were in two smaller tents near by. All night it blew and snowed, and we awoke occasionally to hear the straining of the canvas and the swish and patter of dry snow on the sides of the tent.

Next morning it was still snowing but the wind had dropped completely. The black line of the moraine stood out above a sea of cloud, and the fearsome-looking Tent Peak was, as usual, half-obscured by a snow-storm. In spite of the inauspicious weather we decided to send the cook and Phintzu down to Camp 1, and to push on with Ang Nima, Ang Babu and three or four days' food to try

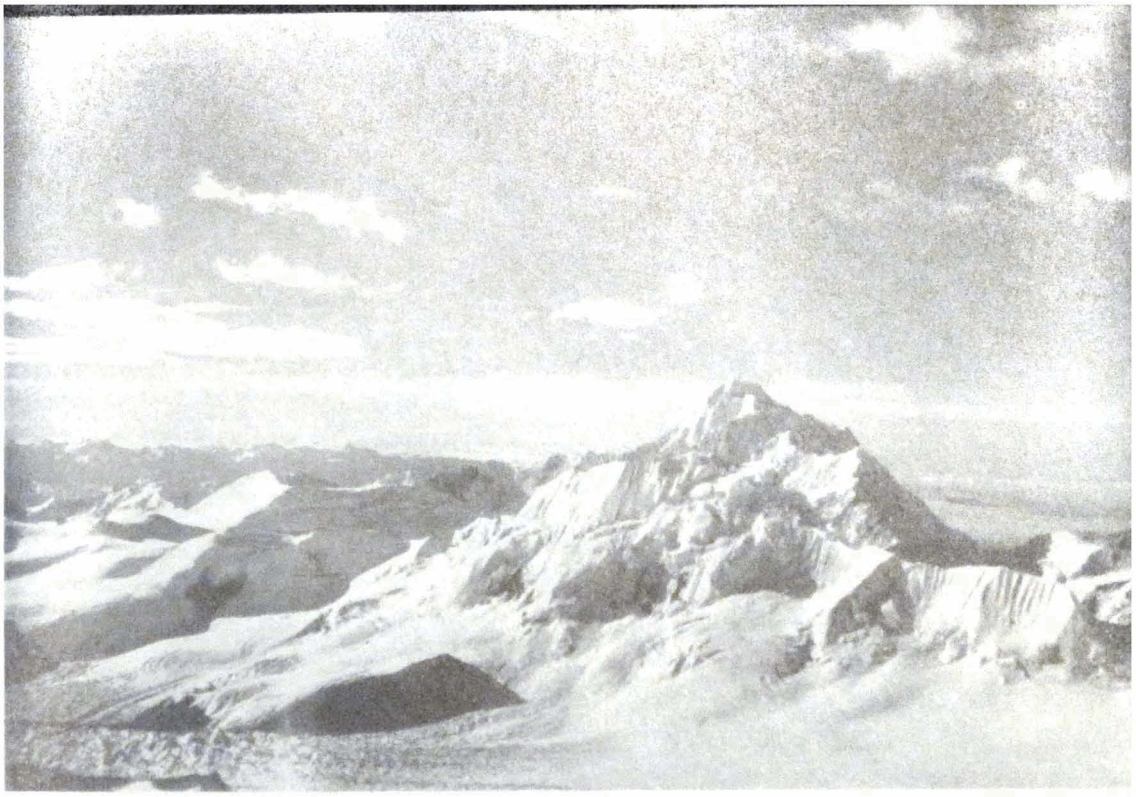
to establish a camp on the summit of the Langpo La. The rock face was so steep that all the new snow had avalanched off it, and by the time we were ready to attempt the arête running up to the Sphinx and Pyramid we hoped that it would also be safe.

One hour's walk took us to the foot of the 1000-foot rock wall leading up to the Langpo La, but it was much steeper than we had anticipated, and after a couple of hours' work we were still unable even to get on to the rock. The holds all seemed to slope outwards, and every ledge was filled with snow or loose gravel. Each of us in turn attempted to force a way up the rock while the others stood shivering below with the new snow running down their necks and soaking through their clothes, listening apprehensively to the roar of small snow avalanches crashing down the couloirs and pouring over the rock faces. Once a rather larger avalanche came down quite near where I was standing and I was knocked flat by the wind of its passing. Until then I had never realised the force of the draught produced by the displacement of air as an avalanche descends.

At last Harrison, with his prodigious reach, managed to find a way up the rock, and we hauled our heavy rucksacks after us on the rope. In spite of a line held by the man at the bottom to keep the rucksacks away from the edges, they were considerable torn and damaged. A crampon hurtled down, narrowly missing one of those waiting below, then a porter's load burst and a thin stream of *tsamba*

poured down the rocks, and a cooking-pot leaped the open bergschrund and crashed to the glacier below. The climbing was extremely difficult and the porters continually declared they would not be able to follow.

As the rock seemed to be just as steep above and it was snowing harder than ever, we realised we would have to return to the Base Camp and wait until the weather was more settled. The porters welcomed this decision with enthusiasm and we set about lowering the loads that we had hauled up with so much difficulty. After a weary trudge down the glacier we reached the Base Camp where the cook and Phintzu were comfortably ensconced, although they had only been told to go as far down as Camp 1, Mahn Bahadur's excuse being that he had come down to buy milk from the yak-herds and to make toffee and that he had had every intention of returning to Camp 1 on the following day. We also found that Kilo was suffering from snow-blindness after his visit to Camp 2 in diffused light. Snow-blindness, which is caused by the inflammation of the minute capillary blood-vessels that serve the eye, is extraordinarily painful; it feels just if one's eyelids were filled with red-hot sand. Any exposure to light causes additional irritation and watering of the eyes. One is more prone to become snow-blind while straining to see objects in a diffused or hazy light than in bright clear sunshine. The only remedy is to remain in the dark, although the application of



SINIOLCHU FROM THE LANGPO LA

TRYING TO FIND A WAY UP THE LANGPO LA. WE EVENTUALLY CLIMBED JUST TO THE LEFT OF THE HANGING GLACIER IN THE CENTRE, ON THE TOP OF WHICH WE CAMPED

cocaine or adrenalin may dull the pain and cause the blood-vessels to contract. The best preventive is to wear snow-glasses which eliminate the harmful rays.

June 2nd was a pleasant day of rest at the Base Camp. Having drawn lots as to which of the porters should act as butcher, we killed a sheep which Harrison and Sams had led with them from Lachen and had kidney and mutton chops for lunch. This method of ensuring one's supply of fresh mutton, though somewhat painful—for one gets rather attached to such a camp follower—is strongly to be recommended. In the afternoon it stopped snowing, but there was still an icy wind. I had fired the others with my enthusiasm for natural history and we spent the afternoon collecting flowers and watching birds. Our chief find was a curiously attenuated-looking pink primula with round mealy leaves. It grew only in dark hollows among boulders, and had an exquisite hyacinthine scent. We also visited a yak-herd who had pitched his tent at 17,000 feet, while his yaks and sheep grazed another thousand feet higher, right to the edge of the snow line. I asked him if he had seen any snow men around this way. He admitted he had occasionally seen their tracks, but so far this year he had not encountered any. Lhonak, he said, was one of their favourite haunts.

On the way back to our camp we stalked some marmots who sat up on their hind-legs outside their

buries looking like a cross between a kangaroo and a beaver. They are of a light reddish-brown colour, have blunt rodent-like faces and sit up with their front paws in a begging position. They have a shrill bird-like whistle, and whenever they make this noise their paws and bodies twitch like a squirrel's. We saw several Elwes' horned lark, some comic little ground choughs, a willow warbler, a very lovely rosefinch, a spectacular black, white and scarlet redstart (Hodgson's) and several varieties of snow and mountain finches. Most impressive of all was the huge lammergeyer vulture who used to sweep over our camp, his gigantic wings making no visible motion. The sound of the wind in his pinions was like the whine of a bullet. In the evening I pressed the fifty different wild flowers we had collected and then we supped off mutton broth, liver and onion and chips, followed by caramel pudding.

I find that my expedition diaries are very largely filled with descriptions of what we had to eat, but this is inevitable when food plays such an important part in one's day. Not only is one exceedingly hungry—until higher altitudes are reached—but on an expedition meals acquire an almost sacramental significance. A good cook is an essential to a successful expedition. After dinner—it was too good a meal to be called supper—we lit our pipes and had one of our usual abstruse and all-embracing discussions. It is very easy to put the world right when you are lying in your sleeping-bag at 17,000 feet after a good

dinner. On this occasion we decided that the teachers of the young were to blame for everything that was wrong and that if the schoolmasters could reorganise their methods and teach the spirit of Christianity, without such deadly emphasis on the ritual, and could implant an abiding horror of war the world could be changed in ten years.

The next morning we decided to move up to Camp 1, and all set off with small loads, lazing up in the warm sunshine, watching birds and collecting flowers. We spent a delightful hour sitting at lunch beside a small rock-girt lake. In the afternoon it came on to blow and snow again. The next day we were at Camp 2 once more, although a clammy mist came up from the valley and the mountains were still hidden in cloud. All five porters stayed the night at Camp 2, though the cook and Ang Babu complained of headaches.

June 5th was a more successful day, though the weather was still unsettled. The valleys were full of monsoon-like billows of cloud and the Tent Peak struggled with its habitual snow-storm. After waiting an hour for the snow to stop, we left the tents with Ang Nima only, while the other porters returned —with evident delight—to the Base Camp. We took only one tent with us, food for four days and two 70-foot lines. Even so, our loads were uncomfortably heavy when it came to climbing. All night long avalanches had continued to pour down the steep face of the Langpo La, but there had been none

since the early morning and we thought the mountain safe enough to justify another attempt.

After the initial steep face, which had troubled us the last time, the angle became easier though the rock was unpleasantly rotten. The snow in the couloirs had been so compressed by the recent passage of avalanches that it afforded good, if steep, going; one or two kicks with the toe of the boot gave an excellent footing. Once when we were spread across a patch of snow we heard the terrifying roar of an avalanche above us. We instinctively pushed our axes in and hung on to them, but it was too late to move. We could hear the ice and rocks crashing down and the evil hiss of the snow and the violent wind that always accompanies an avalanche. Luckily it thundered down the next couloir and with a deafening noise and volumes of white wind-cloud it ran far out across the glacier, perilously near our tent, which we could still see as a black dot on the dazzling whiteness. It came on to snow again and Ang Nima, with his heavier load, found the climbing difficult. His load was attached to his forehead with a scarf as head-strap, and we had to steady it for him as he climbed. We were all on the same rope, taking it in turn to lead. Cooke or Harrison usually led up the rock while I went ahead on snow or ice. The face was exceedingly severe and was only justifiable in that we could get perfect belays in the hard-packed snow. As we cut steps up the final ice couloir we were in the track of a fine stream of

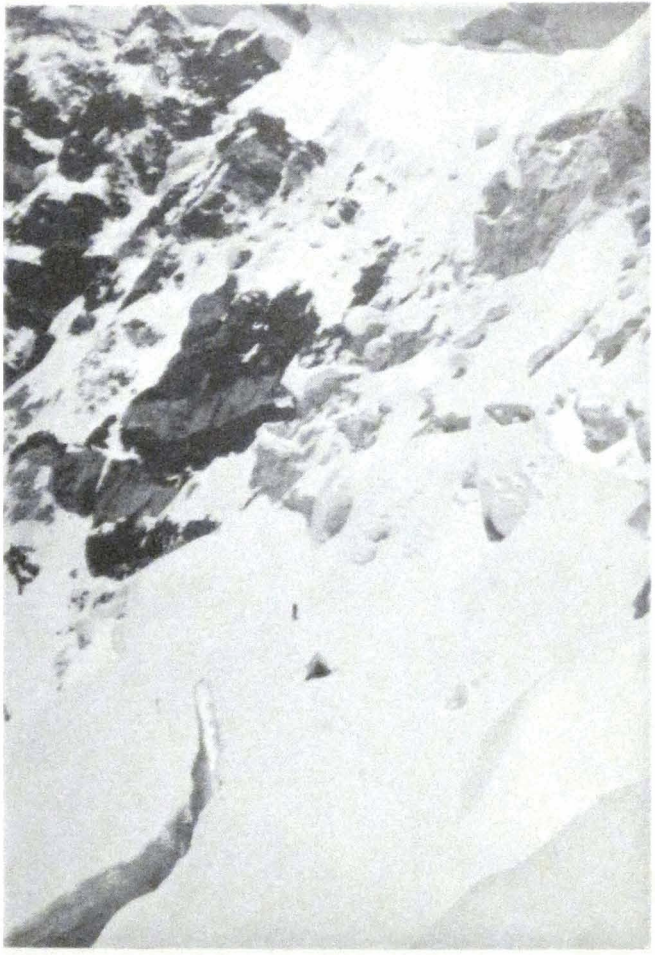
snow which poured off the rocks above and to the left. Sometimes it went down our necks and piled up round our legs but more often it was whirled into the sky before it reached us, like a lakeland stream in a strong wind. The ice couloirs led straight up to the top of the La but the final pitch became impossibly steep and we were forced out on to some towering serracs of ice on the right. We managed to cut across tangled blocks and gaping crevasses at the snout of this hanging glacier and then found ourselves on a gently sloping shelf which seemed to lead up diagonally to the La.

We had been climbing vigorously for 8 hours with only a short halt for sardines, biscuits and chocolate, but so difficult was the going that we could not have been much more than 800 feet above the camp. The small platform on which we found ourselves appeared to be poised between two long bergschrunds which gaped so widely that it seemed as if the whole shelf would break away and crash down to the glacier beneath. However, it was the only possible camp-site, for a gale of wind was howling over the top of the La 200 feet above us, whereas here it was sheltered. Our shelf was at such an angle that we had to excavate a platform two feet deep at the back to hold our tent. Using a 'Tommy' cooker we made several lots of tea and divided a tongue and fruit cake among us. We all felt very fit except for Ang Nima who complained of a headache. After a fruitless attempt to complete our *Times* crossword,

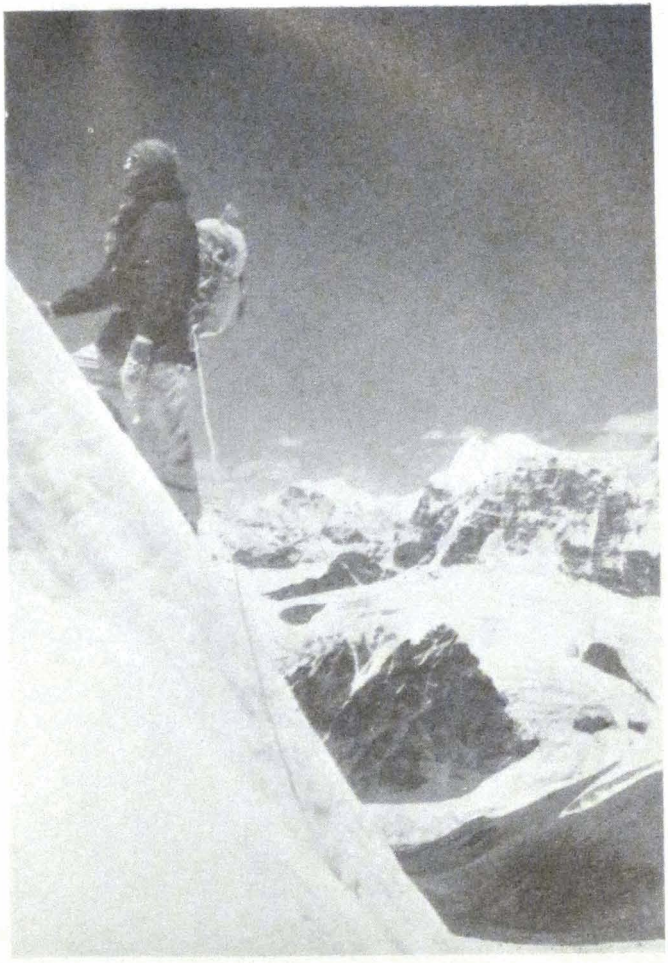
we went to sleep, all four of us packed with difficulty into one small tent, where we had a somewhat disturbed night as pieces of ice kept breaking away below us so that our shelf shivered and rumbled.

At 4 o'clock we breakfasted off tea, bath olivers, butter and marmalade. At that grey hour of the morning it is difficult to eat anything at all, and getting dressed requires an almost intolerable exertion of body and will-power. The valleys were still full of a level sea of solid-looking mauve cloud, but the Langpo Peak was in dazzling sunshine against an Italian blue sky. Plumes of snow trailing from the summit warned us that we must expect trouble on the top of the La. Only the western arête of the Tent Peak was visible, the rest of the mountain being hidden in a banner of cloud. The rounded head of the Sphinx obscured the main summit of the Pyramid. Having struck camp, we set off in high spirits at 6 o'clock, hoping to get on to the La and follow the arête to the top of the Sphinx, camping just this side or beyond the summit in a position from which we could attempt the Pyramid on the following day.

I kicked steps straight up for the ridge 200 feet above us, but was soon forced to the right by a wide bergschrund. This route was easier, although we were being driven away from the Pyramid. The last 50 feet were perilously steep, though the snow was firm; I had to kick steps, dig my ice-axe in above me and then pull myself up on it. This method of



CAMP BESIDE CREVASSE NEAR THE SUMMIT OF LANGPO LA



APPROACHING THE RIDGE OF THE LANGPO LA

progress depended on perfect balance and would have been impossible in a strong wind. As we climbed, we could hear the wind whistling over the La above us, and great pieces of snow and ice were broken off and hurled far out over the glacier. Now we met its full fury, and before I was far enough up to see over the top I had to crouch flat and hang on to my ice-axe to prevent myself from being blown away. Several times Cooke and I were nearly torn from our holds as we flattened ourselves into the snow. A few feet short of the La my nose and cheeks went dead with frostbite, and we realised that life would not be possible there until the wind dropped.

Reluctantly we returned, and sat by our camp-site in boiling sunshine until the snow that was blown over us from the ridge above made us re-pitch our tent for shelter. At midday the wind dropped and we retraced our steps to the summit of the La and made a reconnaissance from there. The Pyramid could be seen from this position, much further away than we had expected. The route up the Sphinx looked fairly straightforward, but it was impossible to get on to this arête from our present position because of a vertical wall of ice which barred our way. The final part of the Pyramid arête seemed to be a knife-edge ridge, but it was not unduly steep. There was a good view over the side of the La on to the Jonsong Glacier, and to the right to the first and second Langpo peaks and to the gently sloping mass of the Jonsong Peak. We returned once more to our

camp-site and lunched off tunny fish and biscuits. Ang Nima again complained of a headache. Our food supplies were running short, the wind was increasing again—no wonder we talked of returning. We simply had not the porter-power to lay siege to a peak of such magnitude as the Pyramid. At last we decided to return once more to the couloir up which we had climbed the day before and to try to reach the La on the far side of it, thus short-circuiting the *mauvais-pas* we had seen in our reconnaissance; and then to attempt the Sphinx from there.

Travelling without loads we crossed the couloir and worked our way up 100 feet of steep rotten rock. This led to a final 100 feet of steep snow above ice and then, after tunnelling through a formidable cornice we were on the La and had found a way to the summit. This took about two hours. We returned to the camp intending to start at dawn on the following day and to push our next camp as far on as possible. We all felt rather headachy, so took two aspirins each and went to sleep. Personally I slept for nine hours with only one short break; in all my clothes and a double eiderdown bag I was as warm as I could wish. The great secret of being comfortable on snow is to make a depression which more or less fits the body.

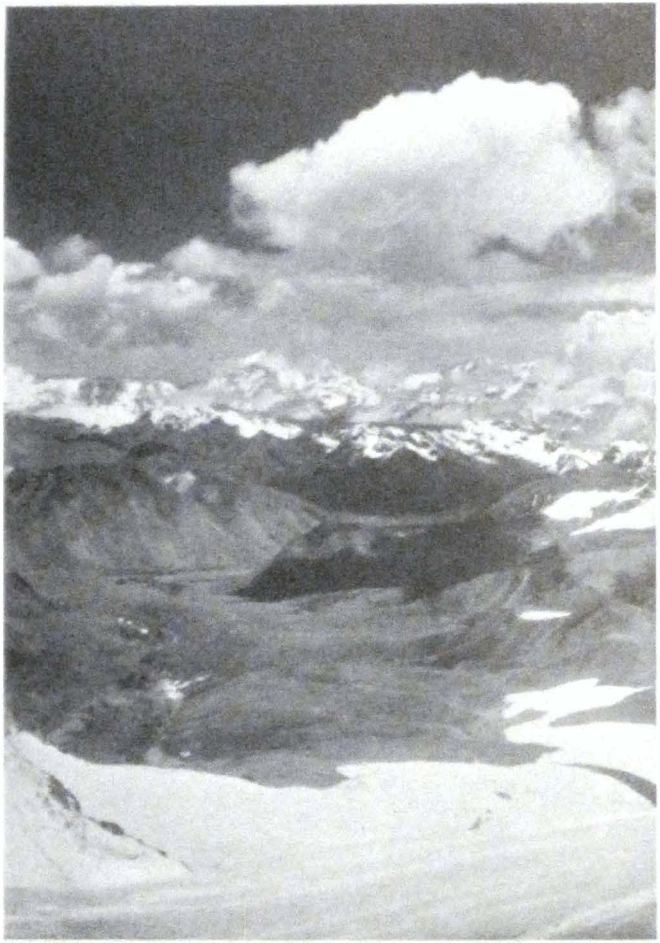
On June 7th we woke to hear the dismal sound of snow pattering on to the tent and to see the valleys full of cloud. But the sun soon appeared and after a few violent gusts of wind it became calm. Owing to

the inevitable slowness of movement at this height, it was 6 o'clock before we had put on our boots, packed up the tent and loaded the rucksacks. To save time we climbed on two ropes, Cooke and I on the first rope, and Harrison and Ang Nima on the second. We carried loads of 15 or 20 lbs. each. As we came over the top of the La we were welcomed by one of the most remarkable views I have ever seen: far away to the west, Everest, Lhotse and Makalu appeared over the top of the clouds, like a rim to a flat world, and nearer at hand Longridge, the Jonsong Peak and Langpo hid the highlands of Tibet. On the other side of the La, over the precipitous eastern shoulder of the Langpo Peak, a sea of blue hills, including Chomiomo, Pauhunri and distant Chomolhari, stretched right round the eastern horizon to Siniolchu and across the gap to Simvu. The great oasis of Lhonak showed brown and green among all these snowy peaks and glaciers. The Chanson Glacier terminated not far below us in a line of great pointed ice pinnacles, looking like the sails in a yacht race. We could see our own tiny tent on the Upper Langpo Glacier and the track wandering down to Camp 1. The Podong La and Tent Peak La showed very clearly, the Tent Peak itself looking as formidable as ever with its customary plume of snow. The Nepal Peak, though visible from the La yesterday, could not be seen today. Siniolchu stood up as the ideal of mountain beauty. It appeared from here to be standing alone and we could the better

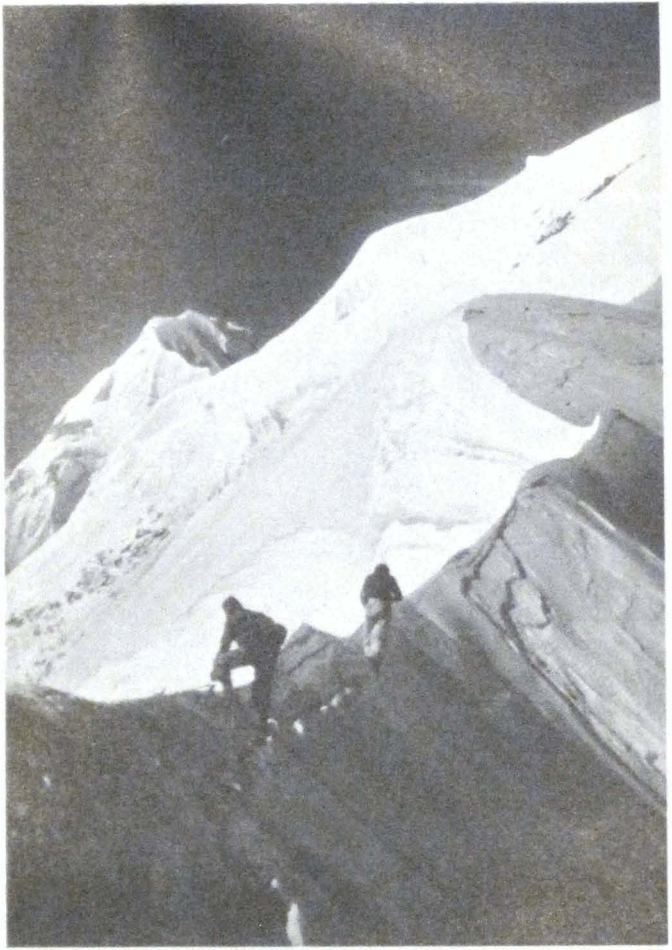
appreciate its exquisite form. From here the ridge running up from the Zemu Glacier showed in high relief, also the Simvu Saddle and the ridge we had failed to get up a month before.

Our arête sloped very steeply down to the west, so we kept almost on the crest of the ridge to avoid the danger of avalanches. Twice Harrison slipped down a crevasse but was held by the rope and easily pulled out. At last we reached a difficult place where there was a break in the ridge and we had to cut steps up the edge of a triangular block of ice which was almost vertical. We all got up this except Ang Nima who said it was no good, and after falling twice on to the rope, he refused to try again. He explained that three of his Darjeeling friends had been killed on a similar place on Nanga Parbat and that he would never be able to pass it. We decided to return to a camp-site we had passed a few hundred feet lower, to camp at once as the wind was increasing again, and to leave Ang Nima behind while we made a final try for the summit on the following day.

We had pemmican for supper, followed by tea and *tsamba*. There was a most uncomfortable crush in the tent and we were all feeling the height. We felt heavy and depressed and without much desire to eat or to do anything else. However, we all slept well, though breathing was difficult. When I woke up in the night I could hear the others breathing heavily several times as if they were just going to dive into deep water, and then later their breathing would



VIEW FROM THE SPHINX ARÊTE OF LHONAK VALLEY



CLIMBING THE SPHINX ARÊTE. TENT PEAK IN BACKGROUND

cease altogether for some time as if life had suddenly been suspended, then the gasping would start again.

At 3.30 next morning it was blowing a gale and snow was lashing the tent, but it stopped snowing soon afterwards, and when we staggered out of the tent at 7 it was still bitterly cold and blowing an icy west wind. The view was as wonderful as on the day before, but as we got frostbitten if we lingered to admire it, we hurried on, leaving Ang Nima groaning quietly in the tent. I wore my felt-lined climbing-boots, four pairs of socks, puttees, grey flannel and windproof trousers, a flannel shirt, three sweaters, a ski-jacket, windproof coat, wool helmet, wool and leather gloves, and snow-glasses. I carried my crampons, a scarf, some food — chocolate, biscuits, butter, raisins and sardines—a compass, map and camera.

The awkward gap was passed without difficulty, and after circumventing several more unpleasant corners we reached the summit of the Sphinx (23,500 feet) at 11 o'clock. There was a hollow near the summit where we could have camped had we been able to push on as far the day before. Now there was hardly time to descend to the La between the Sphinx and the Pyramid, to climb the Pyramid and then to return to the camp before nightfall, especially as the last part of the Pyramid arête seemed very difficult. Two of us were in favour of attempting it, but the third thought it was suicidal and his council prevailed. He was probably quite right, for we only

had half a day's food left and we might well have been held up again by bad weather.

We returned without adventure and reached the camp at 2 o'clock. Ang Nima had come to life and had melted large quantities of drinking water on the flap of the tent in the sun. For this we were most grateful as we had had nothing to drink for eight hours. We then packed up the tent, finished our last scraps of food and said goodbye to the Sphinx. The descent was difficult for tired men—personally I am always more frightened when descending—but we were back at Camp 2 by 5.30. The others wanted to camp, but I was in favour of going right on down while the weather was fine, and this we eventually did, leaving everything behind us except our sleeping-bags. The snow bridges on the glacier had melted since we were last there, and several times one or other of us fell through on apparently level going, to be pulled out again with the help of the rope. It was quite dark by the time we passed Camp 1 and I, feeling very energetic, ran on to tell Mahn Bahadur to prepare a supper worthy of the occasion.

I was so relieved to be off the mountains again that my weariness had disappeared. Steering a course on Vega, I reached the camp at about 9 o'clock. The others came in some time afterwards, having lost their way. In the camp we found a parcel from Mr. Gould which contained a large cake and some bread and fresh vegetables. We sat

round a roaring fire watching a half moon rising over the shoulder of a hill. The cook produced an enormous supper but we were disappointed to find how little we could eat. We were too exhausted. But we felt as happy as it is possible for mortals to feel, even though we had not reached the top of the Pyramid.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Ascent of the Fluted Peak

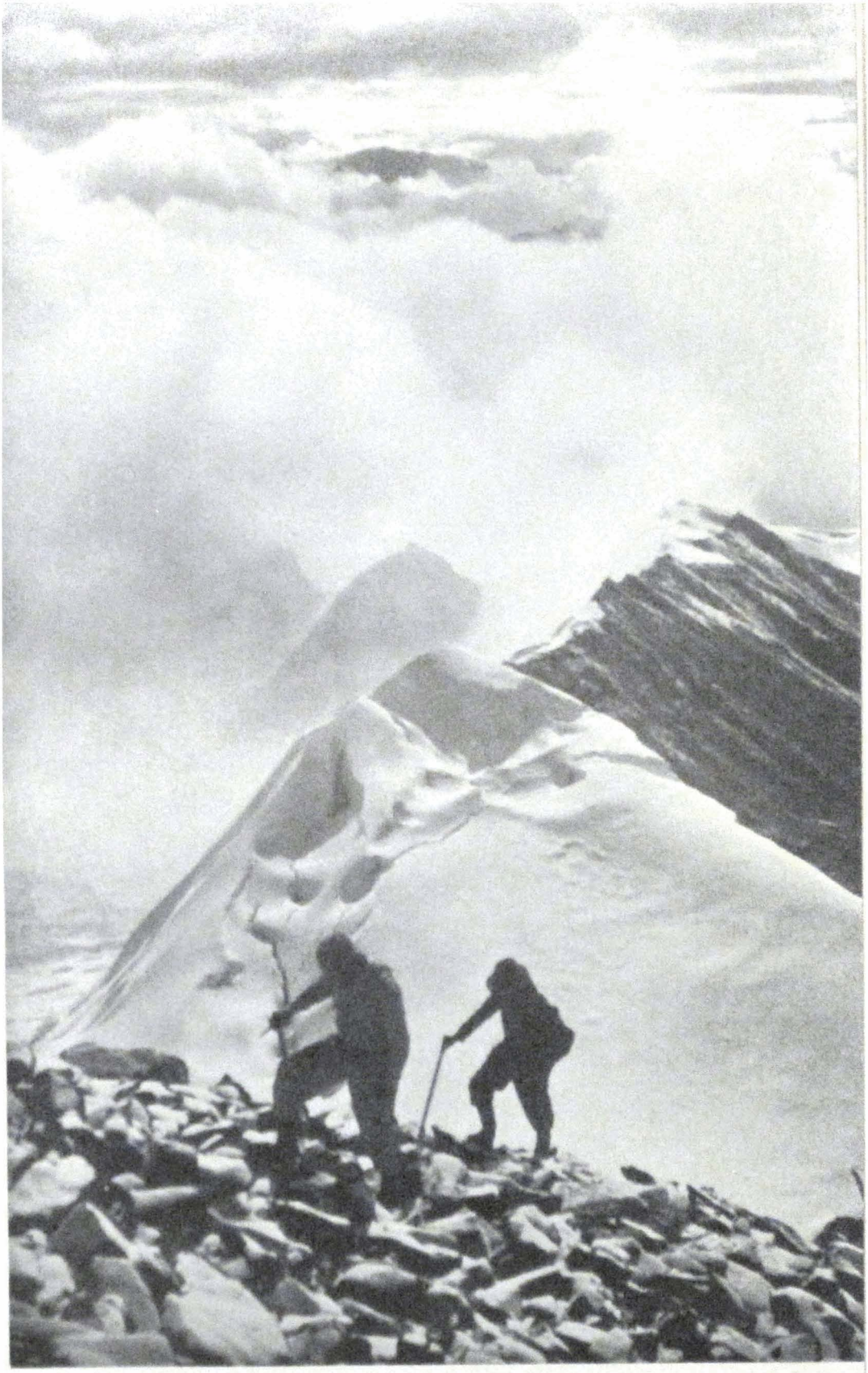
AFTER our return from the Sphinx we spent two idyllic days resting, collecting plants and eating the large and beautifully cooked meals that Mahn Bahadur prepared. By this time it was full summer: Swallow-tail, Apollo, tortoise-shell and clouded-yellow butterflies flew around in the warm sunshine, new birds arrived and all the flowers were in bloom. My search for new plants was always fruitful, for the Himalayan flowers are extraordinarily local: a blue iris grows in profusion in one small valley, but is found nowhere else; a certain primula flourishes on one stony hillside, but is replaced by another species on the opposite side of the valley. We found sixteen species of primula in the vicinity of our camp, from snowy white to the colour of vintage port. The blue poppies were the most wonderful of all the plants; the sudden discovery of those translucent blue petals and rusty green foliage against a background of snow and bare mountain peaks never ceases to have something miraculous in it. The azaleas were coming into flower too, not with the lavish exuberance of their close relations, the rhododendrons, but with a more restrained and orderly beauty. A bush which was a foot at the most in

height would be covered with white or pale purple flowers, while higher up the valleys there were varieties with dark, leathery leaves and a few single cream or plum-coloured waxy blooms.

On June 11th we set off up the Langpo Chu with three days' food, intending to climb the Fluted Peak. We took Ang Nima, Ang Babu and Kilo to carry the loads and look after the camp. As the Fluted Peak is only 20,000 feet, we did not mean to take the porters on the climb. From what we had seen of it from the neighbouring heights, it appeared to be a rock problem, with snow and ice only on the final few hundred feet. This peak cannot have escaped the appreciative eye of Dr. Kellas when he was in this part of the Himalaya in 1910, but there is no record of his having attempted it. In 1933 Osmaston, Stobart and Lattimer tried to climb it but did not reach the summit. We had a delightfully leisurely walk with light rucksacks beside the Langpo Chu, which meandered peacefully at the foot of a valley whose grassy sides were starred with flowers. In the afternoon we camped on some sand beside a small lake at the foot of the glacier, a mile to the south-east of our peak. We had hoped to climb higher but it came on snow and there was no visibility. As usual after a rest day we all felt very lethargic. After tea the snow stopped falling, the clouds rolled back and the sun shone again. We put on gym shoes and went up the rocks to prospect a way on to the rocky ridge which we intended to

attempt. The difficulty of getting on to a Himalayan peak is sometimes as severe as the climb itself; however, we found a possible route between two glaciers which flowed down towards our camp. When we reached the shoulder of the hill above our tent, the clouds cleared on the far side of the Fluted Peak, and we saw the glacier falling in a gigantic tangle of jagged serracs to a milky green lake of considerable size. Beyond that the wide brown valley of the Lhonak Chu rose to the Tibetan frontier—a range of high pointed peaks with the Chorten Nyima La (19,036 feet) cutting down in the centre. We could also see Korayedu's two rounded summits and behind us the Langpo Peak and Tent Peak caught the coppery evening sunshine. It is extraordinary how peaks can change their character completely when viewed from different positions or in an unusual light. We would not have recognised the Tent Peak had we not known it by its position.

In the evening it came on to snow again and a cold mist rose from the valley. After supper of pea soup and fried bully beef, we were just going to sleep when there was a noise as of tins being knocked together just outside the tent and the sound of breathing and grunting. One of the others remarked that it was very late for Nima to be washing up and I said I thought it was a snow leopard. In Greenland I was always expecting to see polar bears, and the consequence was that I did see twice as many as anybody else, and in the Himalaya I was



RECONNOITRING THE FLUTED PEAK

continually on the look-out for snow leopards. That night I dreamt that one attacked the tent and I fought it with an ice-axe and eventually drove it away. Next morning, after a breakfast of porridge with plenty of butter and golden syrup in it, we emerged from our tent at 4.30. The dawn was piercing the low clouds and promised a fine warm day, which might give way to snow in the afternoon. A line of large pad-marks showed in the soft sand beside the lake, and the plate we had fried the meat in had been licked clean and carried some distance away from the tent; the pad-marks were 27 inches apart, and each one was 4 inches wide and 5 inches long: there could be no doubt that it was a snow leopard and an exceptionally large one.

With Ang Nima carrying our rucksack up to the rocks we followed a rocky stream between the two glaciers and climbed a fairly easy gully—which we named Snow Leopard Gully—to the ridge. The gully led up past a rather awkward chockstone pitch to a steep scree shoot which joined the ridge at a spot conveniently marked by a pillar of brown rock. Here we roped up. The clouds gradually lifted to give us a wide view over to the Chorten Nyima La. The colouring of the mountain-sides there was reminiscent of Corot's earlier paintings, Avignon Castle for instance. Warm beech and bracken colour contrasted with the deep violet and indigo cloud shadows on the far side of the La. Snow squalls intermittently swept up the Lhonak Valley

to the pass, but we had fine weather and only a light wind. It seemed as if the vanguard of the monsoon swept up the Lhonak Valley to be vanquished by the frowning frontier wall of Tibet.

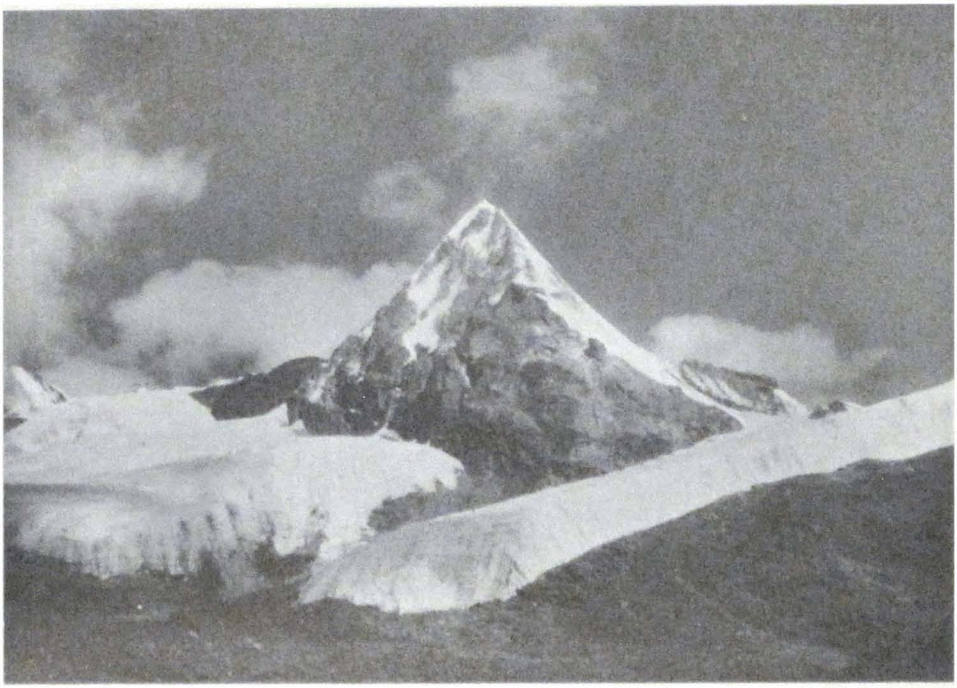
The climbing on the ridge was straightforward, over easy rock which afforded plenty of variety and good belays. Occasional descents were needed to avoid the gendarmes which guarded the ridge. At one point we were held up for half an hour by a difficult place which Cooke tried to avoid by traversing out to the right; but we found ourselves on steep and holdless slabs and were forced to return to the *mauvais-pas* which we turned by following a steep chimney pitch to the left of the ridge. It was on this section of the climb that one of the others knocked out a loose boulder the size of my head; luckily I was looking up at the time and was able to avoid it as it whizzed past to crash once or twice against the mountain before it buried itself in a snowfield below. It was 10 o'clock by this time and we stopped for a hurried lunch of sardines, cheese, biscuits and chocolate, realising that we would only just have time to get to the summit and return to the camp before dark, especially as it looked more difficult ahead, where the rock gave way to an undulating fluted ridge of snow and ice. We all agreed that so far it was one of the finest rock-climbs we had ever done.

After lunch we had some trouble with the rope. It became soaked from the melting snow which

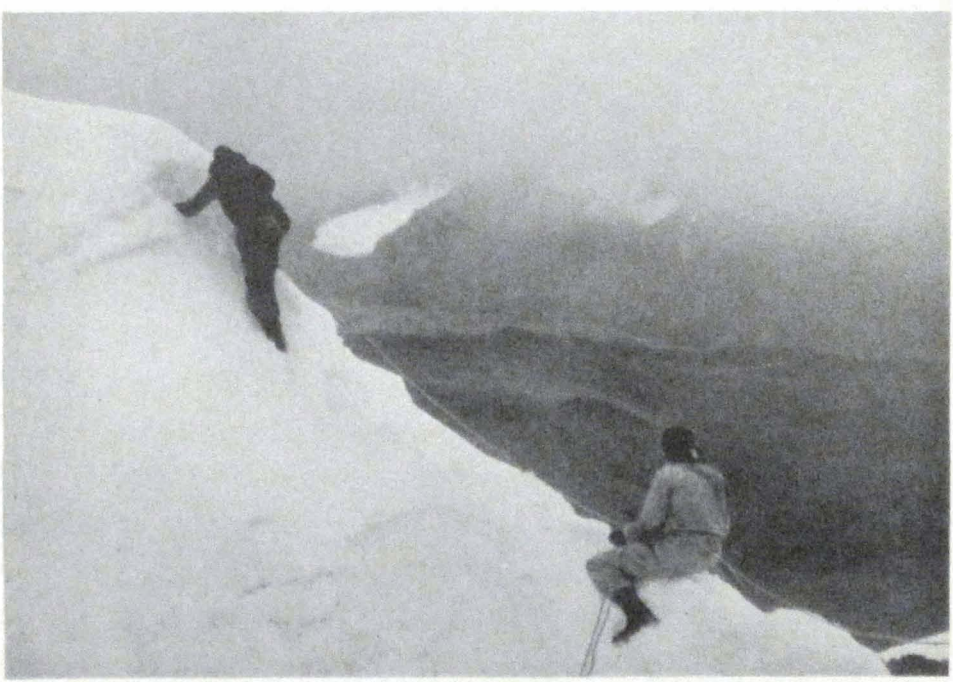
adhered to it and then froze like a wire hawser. The weather was deteriorating; it grew colder and the clouds frequently swept right down over us. We reached a horizontal snow ridge of exceeding sharpness from which as we climbed along we could look down on either side into the open crevasses of the glaciers below, while the snow and ice that we hacked off the ridge started miniature avalanches which rattled over the icy slabs into the gaping bergschrunds. The ridge was so rotten, after the mild sunshine of the morning, that it would not bear us, and the leader had to sit astride it and demolish with his ice-axe the top 2 or 3 feet of rotten snow; only then was it possible to stand upright and to push the ice-axe into the firmer snow and ice beneath.

Once again the time-factor intervened and we held a council of war. Earlier on we had decided that even if it kept fine we ought to turn not later than 2 o'clock if we were to regain our camp before dark, and even this was allowing only half the time for the descent that the ascent had taken. It was now after 2 o'clock and was starting to snow, we were still some distance from the summit, and it looked very much more difficult ahead. As had happened on the Pyramid climb, opinion was strongly divided and it was left to me to give the casting vote. I thought we could reasonably risk going on; we could descend the ridge at good speed, abseil down the difficult pitches and if necessary do the easier final part of the climb in darkness.

Cooke continued to excavate a route along the snow arête, leaving the debris to rattle down on either side of the ridge. Soon the mist swirled over us and his work of demolition was hidden from us, though the result of his toil continued to pour past us to be swallowed up again in the mist. When Cooke emerged we found that he had made a twelve-foot tunnel to avoid climbing over an awkward overhanging bridge of rotten ice and snow. After crawling through this we came to an unpleasant place where the angle of the ridge became vertical, and after cutting away the looser surface snow and ice, Cooke had to cut both foot- and hand-holds for a perilous ten feet. A final fifty feet of steep but not unduly difficult snow and ice brought us at last to the blunt, mist-shrouded summit. It was then 3.30; it had taken us 10½ hours to get up, and in 3 hours it would be dark. It was now snowing steadily. I was last man on the rope and I joined the others for one moment in the mist on the sharp spade-shaped summit ridge and then turned to descend. Cooke lowered the two of us bodily over the vertical pitch and, once he had climbed down himself, we all moved together, concentrating in silence on all the small details that go to make a rapid descent safe—to lean out on steep slopes so that the steps do not crumble, to keep the rope out of the way of the other climbers, to hold one's ice-axe in such a position that in any moment of emergency one can stop oneself or hastily throw a loop



THE FLUTED PEAK. THE RIDGE WHICH WE CLIMBED RUNS DOWN TOWARDS THE RIGHT-HAND CORNER



COOKE AND HARRISON NEAR THE SUMMIT OF THE FLUTED PEAK

over the axe and hold the others, not with a jerk which would pull the axe out or break the line, but with a gradual tightening like the action of a spring.

Soon the clouds thinned around us and we caught a glimpse of the ridge below and then of the scree slope beyond the ridge. This vision is firmly imprinted on my mind, for at the same moment a disaster very nearly occurred: on one of the more difficult rock faces, I was traversing across to get off the rock on to the snow, where descent was safe and more rapid, and was edging past an enormous flake of rock a yard wide, when it suddenly came away and crashed downwards. I was just able to jump to one side, catch hold of another rock and pull myself on to it until I found footholds. Meanwhile the flake rebounded over the rocks below and an acrid gunpowdery smell reached our nostrils. When we left the rock for the snow, we unroped to make progress faster, coiled the rope with difficulty —it had frozen stiff—and ran down the scree into the gully, yodelling to attract the porter's attention. Soon Ang Nima appeared to take the rope and rucksack, and by 6.30, just as darkness fell, we were in the camp, feeling so deliriously happy that our weariness was forgotten. That night we slept for ten hours and if the snow-leopard visited us again we were not aware of it.

Next morning the clouds were over the Fluted Peak as we sent the porters back along the route by the Langpo Chu, while we cut over the hill making

a direct line for the Base Camp. It was wonderful to dawdle along watching the birds and looking for new plants. We heard the distinctive bubbling call of the snow-cock and then saw a pair of these streaked greyish birds running like partridges over the rocks. Coming suddenly over the edge of a little coombe we surprised a flock of seventeen burrhal grazing peacefully on the velvety grass a hundred feet below us. The wind was from their direction and as they had not seen us we were able to lie and watch them for half an hour. There were two rams with ponderous curling horns and several sheep, some of which were only half grown. When we were tired of watching them we stood up and in a moment they were away out of the coombe. Soon their curiosity overcame their initial panic and they stopped, facing us, while one or two even came a few steps towards us, then they turned and disappeared over the sky-line in single file. We saw several marmots on this unfrequented hillside, at one place surprising four outside the same bury. They loped awkwardly across to their holes, like aged over-fed dogs trying to hurry, when they were disturbed.

We were back in the Base Camp in time for lunch of mutton patties and tinned pears; then we lay in the sun and after some discussion decided that our next move would be up to the Tibetan frontier to attempt the two peaks of Korayedu (West Peak, 21,700 feet; East Peak, 21,100 feet), and after that I would

race back to join Mr. Gould at Gangtok while the rest of the party returned in a more leisurely manner. I spent the afternoon pressing plants while the others sorted and packed stores. After an excellent supper of soup, roast chicken (tinned) and chips, semolina and stewed fruit, we sat smoking our pipes outside and looking at the bright stars. We sat in silence as no words could express the great content we all felt.

On Sunday, June 14th, we left our Base Camp for good and started to follow the Lhonak Chu in the direction of the Chorten Nyima La. I cut over the hills to the west as I wanted to photograph the Fluted Peak from the north and to look at some lakes I had seen from its ridge. There were duck on one of these lakes and I was anxious to find out what species it was that lived at 17,500 feet. I crossed an open dried-up plain where several marmots lived, surprised another big flock of burrhal and watched a pair of white-capped redstart feeding their young in a nest among the scree that ran down to a shallow lake. Here I had a swim and was surprised to find how warm it was. The second lake appeared to be very deep and was milky green from the glacier which fed it. There were three tufted duck on this lake, but though I was sure they were nesting, I was unable to find their eggs. After this I hurried over to the junction of the Lhonak Chu and Sayok Chu where I had agreed to meet the others. I tried, after watching a dipper and a pair

of white wagtails, to cross the river alone but was very nearly swept off my feet and was glad when Ang Nima emerged from a large yak-herd's tent which I had seen on the far side and helped me across. If two or more people hold hands and support each other, moving one at a time, rivers can be crossed which would be quite impossible alone.

As it was now raining, we all went into the tent, from which a huge brown Tibetan mastiff escaped into the hills with bristling mane and bared teeth; another dog, which was chained up near the tent, barked steadily the whole hour that we were there. Inside, we found a wild-looking but friendly yak-herd with a face burnt almost as black as his coarse home-spun clothes; I don't think he or his wife or small son had washed since they were born. The tent, which was supported on two wooden poles, was made of woven yak-hair with a space between the poles for the smoke of the yak-dung fire to escape. A considerable amount of light percolated through the coarse weave of the cloth, and a fine spray fell inside as the rain splashed against it. Tea was boiled up for us over a metal brazier pierced with holes. It tasted curiously like the silver pellets on Christmas cake, but was none the less acceptable. As it was raining harder than ever, and the mountains were all blotted out, we camped soon after we had passed the yak-herd's tent. It seemed that the great wall of mountains between Sikkim and Tibet stopped the monsoon clouds and caused the frequent

rain squalls which we had noticed sweeping across when we were climbing further south. We wore our hooded oilskin capes, but they only reached to our knees and from there downward we were soaking wet.

At this time we were making for the Sayok La (18,000 feet), but as we had not yet seen it or the Korayedu peaks, we were seriously considering returning to Lachen by the Lungnak La (17,500 feet) and Tangu route. However, early next morning, Korayedu cleared, and we saw that just above our camp was a great rock wall with several hanging glaciers and ice-falls above a line of scree slopes. The Sayok La showed as a snowy gap further west than we had expected. A difficult and unpleasant climb across steep rock and snowfields into which we sank eighteen inches, led over an avalanche-swept couloir to the La. The clouds were coming down again and it was starting to rain; it seemed that a spell of monsoon weather had set in, which would account for the fact that we were all feeling very slack and weary. We agreed that we would have lunch on the far side of the La, and if Korayedu did not show herself we would cross the Sayok La and return by Tangu, sending the porters back to collect our Base Camp supplies and bring them across to meet us.

The Sayok La proved to be a strange wind-swept gap almost surrounded by ice and snow cornices. Korayedu became more and more hidden in clouds

and the glimpse we had caught of two steep hanging glaciers with an inaccessible rock buttress between them had not been very reassuring. When we looked over the far side of the La into a smiling valley where a stream meandered among meadows where yaks were grazing, our minds were made up and we set off towards a yak-herd's tent which we could just make out in the distance. From the map we could see that this stream, the Sayok Chu, soon met the Lhonak Chu, down which the porters could bring the rest of our gear to meet us at the junction. At this stage a further difficulty appeared in that we could not find any way off the steep glacier which led down from the Sayok La towards our Elysian valley. Three places were tried but each one ended in a vertical ice-wall; at last we had to climb almost to the La again and get off the glacier at the top.

We were still reluctant to give up our attempt at Korayedu in spite of the spell of monsoon weather that seemed to be affecting the heights; and judging by the number of avalanches which, loosened by the warm weather, could be heard crashing down through the mists, it would be several days before the mountains would be safe. We sat down to lunch on the moraine to the east of the Sayok La, having made up our minds that if Korayedu did not clear before we had finished our sardines and chocolate we would at once set off down the valley whose sunlit meadows still tempted us. It did not clear;

indeed the mist and cloud descended to the La itself, and soon we put on our rucksacks and turned our backs for good on the high mountains. Our climbing season was over; here was an end of sweating up terrifying rock-ridges, of cutting steps across vertiginous ice-falls, of disappointments, mountain sickness, frostbite and snowburn; now we could wander down the happy valleys, seeing new birds and finding new flowers.

The valley that we were descending was shut in on three sides by formidable peaks whose glaciers could be seen as they emerged from the mist. We soon found a warm lake where we bathed, the water being about blood-heat in the shallower parts. On its shores we found a new red pendicularis, a pinkish cress, and masses of yellow spearwort and marsh-marigold. The hillsides round about were carpeted with azaleas, a foot or so in height, of a heather-purple colour. As the valley gradually widened and flattened, the wild life became more abundant; a pair of cinnamon-coloured ruddy sheld-duck (or Brahminy duck) rose from a reedy pool and flew round with deep grunting notes; some redshank appeared, giving their familiar alarm note; a dipper shot up stream and two rose-finches sat on a flowering shrub with pink lilac-scented blooms. Harrison found a willow-warbler's nest in a juniper bush. Beside the stream, in the middle of the valley, we saw a curious construction which looked like a grave, measuring about 6 feet by 2, and built of large flat

stones. Inside it were many bones. We were puzzling over it when two huge Tibetan mastiffs rushed with a fearful barking from a tent on the hillside, closely pursued by an uncouth-looking yak-herd who was trying to silence them by slinging stones from a yak-hair sling and shouting wild cries. He was an exceptionally ugly man with filthy hair and a much-lined toothless face, but he was most friendly and told us that the stone square was a trap for snow leopards. He accompanied us as far as two very large tents and a stone pen for sheep, of which there were two large flocks on the hillside above. He had the curious Tibetan habit of protruding his tongue as a mark of respect whenever he was spoken to.

Soon after this we reached the junction of our stream with the Lhonak Chu and put up our tents on a level grassy meadow. There were masses of white butterwort in a marshy place beside the stream and a most interesting wader, the ibis bill, which none of us had ever seen before. This bird had a long curved beak and flew round screaming incessantly. We were all feeling the reaction of coming down from the heights and were soon asleep after a large supper of soup, tinned herrings and peaches. At dawn next morning the porters went up the Lhonak Chu to collect the personnel and gear from our Base Camp while we enjoyed a rest day in a delightful valley. The stream glittered in the morning sunshine, and all the level floor of the

valley was carpeted with dwarf azalea bushes rarely more than eighteen inches high, the flowers pure white, a lovely carnation pink, and heather-purple. These fields of delicate coloured small mountain azaleas which run up to the edge of the snow-line are much more beautiful—to my mind—than the almost overpoweringly exuberant giant scarlet and magenta rhododendrons of the lower valleys.

In the middle of the day our porters returned, accompanied by the Lachen postman who had reached the Base Camp the day before. He had come by Tangu and the Lungnak La as the Tsetang route was impassable owing to the bridges having been swept away by the monsoon floods. As well as welcome letters from home he had three dozen eggs and some potatoes for us. He also had news of the Everest expedition: they had established Camp 6 and two climbers were ready there to make a bid for the summit. In the afternoon I left the others and followed the Lhonak Chu to a gorge where the path was forced away from the river and cut across a bare hillside. In this sheltered gorge whose sides were great rock cliffs, hundreds of feet high, I found quite large bushes growing and several new flowers. There were tall white anemones and honesty, pink thistles, yellow jasmine, red tamarisk and suddenly a whole mass of enormous blue poppies with hairy stalks and yellow-green leaves: some the clearest azure, others pinkish-red or cloudy-blue. This gorge was a remarkable place altogether, very

unlike anything I had yet seen in the district.

Next morning, June 17th, we rose at dawn—about 4 o'clock—and saw the great snow peaks at the head of the valley in the thin early morning sunshine, though cloud still surrounded their bases. Skylarks were singing and a white-capped redstart with resplendent red and black plumage whistled energetically on a rock. After a bathe in the deep pool where the two streams met, we breakfasted in the sunshine and then struck camp. Having enlisted the Lachen postman as a willing porter, the loads were less heavy, though with all the bedding and tents and empty boxes (the porters' perquisites) they looked enormous. With the postman as guide, we hoped to cross the Lungnak La to Tangu and to reach Lachen on the following day; there we would part company and I would go ahead to Gangtok where Mr. Gould would now be expecting me.

Our route led us away from the Lhonak Chu on to a vast honey-coloured open plain where many yaks, sheep and goats were grazing. The sheep had curious curved noses—like flamingoes' beaks—and were mainly piebald black and white. The goats had long curly hair and odd twisted horns like algebraic brackets. Our path led us up a side valley past some ruined stone buildings, possibly forts, now overgrown with flowering currant bushes and stinging nettles, and over an easy grassy pass into another valley with a large stream flowing from the north. Here we found a settlement of four tents beside a

ford. A good-looking woman was washing wool in the stream in a bamboo basket; her hair was arranged round a semi-circular framework a yard in diameter, the front of which was studded with coral and turquoise. As we passed, everyone rushed out of the tents to gaze at the unusual visitors and to hold the fierce dogs which strained to get at us.

Here we left the main valley and turned right-handed towards the Lungnak La which lay to the east, up a steep valley beside an old moraine. Some women were picking the bloom off the small white azalea bushes (for tea, perhaps) and singing a loud harsh song with a catch in it, almost like a yodel. We soon found ourselves in a deep valley shut in by great precipices. The rocky slopes between the foot of the crags and the mountain torrent were overgrown with flowering shrubs and plants. Two miles ahead of us the gorge seemed to be completely enclosed by a rock wall down which snow avalanches intermittently poured from the snowfields above, which were now hidden in cloud. Turning a corner, we came upon a beautiful lake which had so far been hidden by a rocky spur. It was of a jade green colour with silver ripples, and was surrounded by banks of golden sand. At the far end some yaks stood dewlap-deep, like Highland cattle in a conventional picture.

Passing the lake, we climbed laboriously up a steep scree slope, following a path which was well-defined except when it disappeared beneath the

snow. The porters were moving very slowly now, finding some difficulty in balancing their cumbersome loads on the steep going; one or two of them walked barefoot all day in spite of the snow we had to cross. We were now in the mist and, having reached the top of the horseshoe cliffs which surrounded the valley, we were surprised when the Lachen postman, who was acting as our guide, led us across to the left over a stony plateau and up another horseshoe valley whose existence we had not hitherto suspected. Much snow obscured the zigzag path and the porters had to negotiate some very difficult places. At the summit (17,500 feet), which was covered with new snow, we found several large cairns. In spite of the mist there were some Hodgson's Grandula and choughs flying about, but no vegetation of any sort appeared.

The descent was very steep and unpleasant for the laden porters, but soon we found hanging gardens on ledges among the crags, and after an hour we were among rhododendrons again. Harrison found a large mauve fritillary, and I found several minute and very beautiful new primulas. There were also masses of deep-violet *primula Royalei* and blue poppy. By now it was snowing again, and dark was falling, and as the porters were getting slower and slower, we decided to stop as soon as we found any firewood, though we knew that Tangu could not be more than two or three miles ahead. At 6 P.M. we camped on a grassy patch surrounded by pink

and saffron-coloured rhododendrons whose foliage was coated with fresh snow.

Although the tent leaked all night we slept well, and awoke next morning to find ourselves on a hill-side overlooking a steep and much-wooded valley leading to Tangu which we reached in a few hours. On the way we found a beautiful white clematis, the four-petalled Sikkim rose and a multi-flowered yellow poppy, like a hollyhock, standing six feet high. More and more new varieties of flowers appeared and then birch trees and cedars as we reached the Tangu-Lachen road in the bottom of the valley. In some places beside the track we found whole fields of primulas in bloom, one primrose colour with an orange centre, another the *primula sikkimensis* that flourishes in English gardens, with hanging cowslip-like flowers, and others mauve or purple.

At Yatung we found a smallish village and saw some men demolishing the mud walls of the best house in the place with picks. Our friend the young headman of Lachen appeared and told us that it was his house and that it was being rebuilt, a process which Tibetan houses go through every fifty years or so. He told us that nearly all the inhabitants of Lachen came up to Yatung at this time of the year to avoid the monsoon rains, but promised to send five porters to Lachen the next day to help us down to Gangtok with all our gear.

It rained all day and we found the dank trees and dripping undergrowth most oppressive after the open

hills and clean fresh air blowing from the high snows. Here, instead of the blue poppy and creeping rock plants, we found the multi-flowered Sikkim lily ten feet high, lush purple orchids, and trees with heavy perfume and exotic blooms. In place of the chough and skylark were noisy babblers and brightly coloured sunbirds. We reached Lachen in the early evening, but it was four hours before the weary porters arrived. In spite of the joys of hot baths and a farewell supper we all felt very depressed. We had had wonderful experiences together, and it was sad to have to part.

Next morning I got up at 2 o'clock, determined to reach Gangtok in a single day. The last two marches had been heavy ones, and the fifty miles from Lachen to Gangtok with its winding cobbled track and continual losing and gaining of height is quite the longest fifty miles I know, especially with the feeling of lassitude that attacks one on descending to the fetid jungle from the hills, but for some unaccountable reason I was quite determined that unless I was unable to put one foot in front of the other I would get to Gangtok that night.

I left Lachen at 2.30 A.M. armed with a torch as it was still dark. When I was a mile or two out from the village I thought I heard something or somebody following me. Each time I stopped the sound of feet behind me stopped too, but at times I could hear breathing, and once a stick broke with a loud crack. I did not think it could be a man, and

imagined it was an animal—a bear of some kind, or a langur monkey. Growing rather frightened, I increased my speed, but I could still hear it coming along the track behind me. Then I started to run, and with the feeling that it was gaining on me, ran faster and faster. I flashed the light behind me occasionally but could see nothing at all, though I could distinctly hear the padding of feet and loud breathing. Becoming more and more panicky, I ran as fast as I could, flashing the light behind me as I ran and shouting to frighten the beast away. However, this led to disaster, for when I reached one of the sharp corners of the track I was unable to take it and fell headlong over the banked-up edge of the path and crashed into the bushes below. I landed unhurt, but lost my torch and made a tremendous noise. All at once the situation struck me as funny and I started to laugh, quietly at first, and then more and more loudly. Afraid of leeches, I did not stop to search for the torch, but hurried back to the track feeling—for some unaccountable reason—quite certain that the animal would have fled. This proved to be so, if indeed there had been anything there at all, and although I could not help looking back occasionally, I heard it no more. I discovered afterwards that bears and langurs do follow people, but more out of curiosity than for any sinister motive.

Once as I came over the top of a rise, treading silently in my gym shoes, I saw a very beautiful wild cat lying sunning itself in the middle of the track.

It was of deep orange or flame colour. I stood still for a moment watching it until suddenly, sensing danger, it disappeared without a sound into the jungle. A thing that troubled me very much was that the soles of my gym shoes came unstuck and flapped beneath my feet as I walked. I was able to attach them with the laces, but stones and dirt kept on getting inside so that my feet were badly blistered. The long pull up from Dikchu to the top of the Penlong La was the worst part of the walk. It was pouring with tropical rain by that time and being soaked to the skin certainly gave some variety to the interminable journey. I was so exhausted that I used to climb for a hundred paces and then sit and rest and sometimes even fall asleep. At last I reached the summit some time after dark, and was able to run down the far side to reach the Residency, very weary and dishevelled, soon after 8 o'clock.

CHAPTER NINE

Chomolhari: Preparations

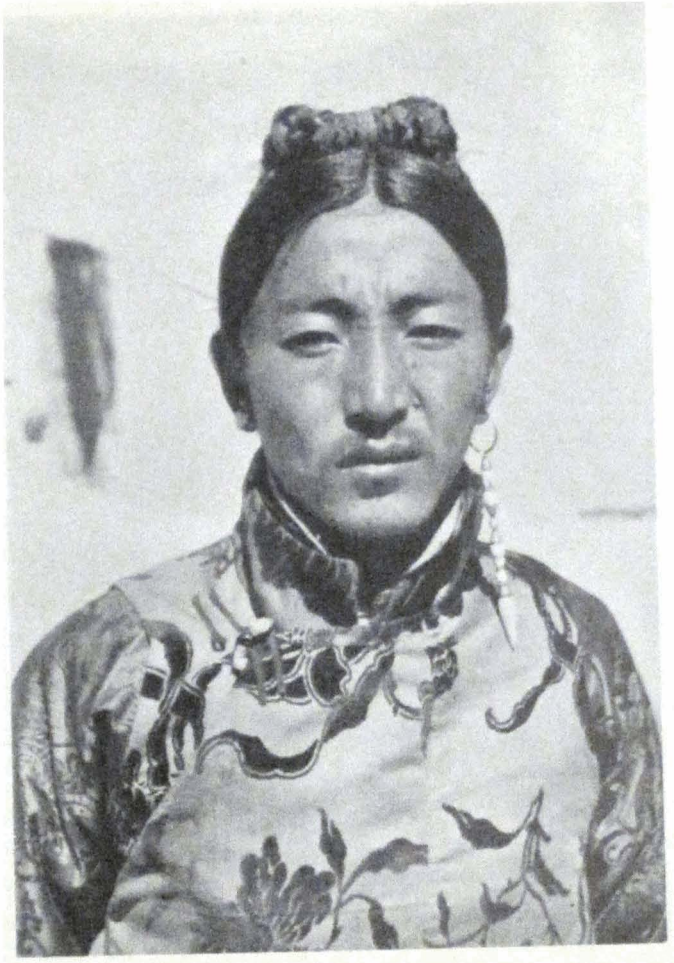
On the last day of July 1936, the British Diplomatic Mission left Gangtok for Lhasa. At the end of February 1937, we returned, having spent just over six months in the Holy City itself. I have written my impressions of Lhasa and of the journey through Tibet in another book.[1]

We did not go beyond Lhasa, as at one time seemed possible, because neither the Lhasa Government nor the Tashi Lama directly invited our mediation. There seemed to be a state of stalemate. The Tashi Lama refused to return to Tibet without his Chinese escort, and the Lhasa Government, though they conceded as much as they possibly could, still resolutely refused to allow the escort into the country. The fact that the Tashi Lama's 'luggage in advance', sent ahead from Jyekundo, was found to contain several camel loads of bombs did little to convince the Tibetans of His Serenity's good faith; though it was realised in Lhasa that the uncompromising attitude of the Tashi Lama was due either to the machinations of self-interested officials in his retinue, who would probably lose everything if they returned to Tibet, or to the fact

[1] *Lhasa: The Holy City.* Chatto and Windus.

that His Serenity was so indebted to his hosts that he was virtually a prisoner of the Chinese.

In the beginning of December 1937, news reached England that the Tashi Lama had died at Jyekundo, and so far his successor has not been discovered. Only recently, July 1939, has the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama been discovered by the customary process of magic and divination. While we were at Lhasa, power was in the hands of the Regent and the Prime Minister, both very young men who were still uncertain of themselves and their followers, and the Kashag, or Cabinet of four ministers, one of whom was a representative of the all-powerful priesthood. There was also a body called the National Assembly which voiced the opinions of the three great monasteries, Drepung, Sera and Ganden, known as the Three Pillars of the State, which, between them, hold close on 20,000 monks. A powerful voice in this more democratic body was Tsarong Shapé, a retired general and Cabinet Minister who was very pro-British in outlook and represented a more progressive party—if one can talk of progress in connection with such a country as Tibet. I saw a great deal of all these officials in Lhasa and became very friendly with some of them. We attended official banquets, which often lasted for four or five hours, and in return we invited our hosts with their wives and families to dinner-parties, and gave cinematograph entertainments which included ancient Charlie Chaplin comedies



A TIBETAN OFFICIAL

AND HIS WIFE

and colour films of themselves and the local scenery.

On our way to and from Lhasa we had spent the night at the squalid mud-walled village of Phari at an altitude of 14,300 feet on the most bleak and wind-swept part of the great Tibetan plateau. Like every European who has stopped there, I was tremendously impressed by the remarkable peak of Chomolhari (24,000 feet), which lies only a few miles from the top of the Tang La, the pass leading northward from Phari. This peak, which rises 10,000 feet sheer from the dusty Tibetan plain, gives a greater impression of sheer height and inaccessibility than any other I know; it drops in a series of almost vertical rock precipices to the low foothills beneath. To the east, a steep col connects it to Kakapu (22,300 feet) and Takapu (21,429 feet), and to a long ridge of completely unexplored snow-covered peaks which run for a hundred miles in a north-easterly direction to terminate in Ning-dzing-zong-ka (23,794 feet), just beside the Karo La (16,200 feet) between Gyantse and Lhasa. To the south a long snow and ice-ridge runs steeply down to lose itself in the unexplored mountains of northern Bhutan. It is thought by many to be the most beautiful mountain in the whole length of the Himalaya on the north and west; that is, on the sides overlooking the plain of Tuna and the Tang La, respectively.

While I was at Phari I went as near to Chomolhari as was possible in the time available and I concluded

that the long southern ridge might be climbed if once one could get on to it. No adequate maps were available, but certainly it would involve an approach from the Bhutan side, which meant that permission from both Tibet and Bhutan would be necessary, and as Chomolhari, which means literally the Goddess of the Holy Mountain, is even more sacred to the Tibetans than Everest, it was unlikely that such permission would be given. I do not think anyone had previously attempted to climb it, though any mountaineer crossing the Tang La, particularly the members of the three Everest expeditions that have passed this way, must have been attracted by the southern arête. Odell, I know, made a reconnaissance of the mountain in 1924. But, on the way to Everest, climbers would be too conscious of the necessity of husbanding their strength, and on the return journey they probably had not the energy to spare, though I think it was the problem of getting permission to climb which kept Chomolhari for so long inviolate. It seemed to me that I was in a strong position so far as the Tibetan permission was concerned. I knew all the Lhasa officials personally, and my friend Hugh Richardson, the British Trade Agent at Gyantse, was still in the Holy City and would, I knew, do all he could to help me. Bhutanese permission was a more difficult problem; however, I had heard much of the enlightened views of the young Maharajah who ruled at Punakha, and certainly Rajah

GROUP OF TIBETANS BELOW NING-DZING-ZONG-KA. THE KARO-LA LIES UP THE VALLEY TO THE RIGHT

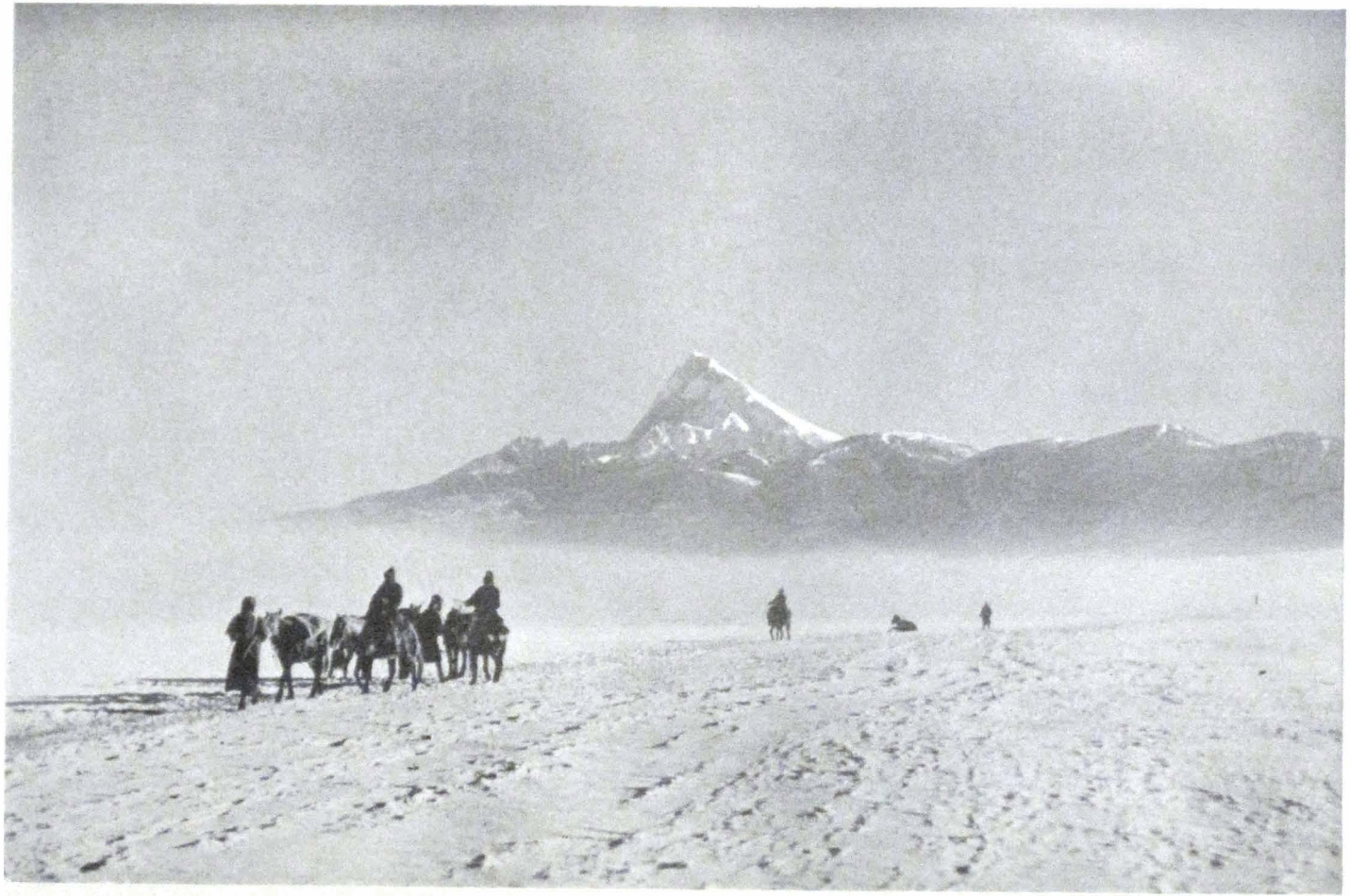
Tobgay Dorje, the English-speaking Bhutanese resident at Kalimpong, would help me in every possible way as long as he did not think the interests of his country were prejudiced.

It was not until the middle of April that the plans which controlled the date of my return to England were sufficiently settled for me to decide to attempt Chomolhari, and by then it was almost too late to do it with any probability of success. The monsoon would break at the end of May or early June, and at such short notice it would be very difficult to collect a party. However, on April 18th I broached the question to the Political Officer at Gangtok. At first he was rather reluctant to trouble the Lhasa authorities with such a minor matter, which might mean a great deal to them. We had realised when we were in Lhasa how sincere and deep are their religious objections to any violation of their holy places; it was only with the greatest difficulty that we had obtained permission for the 1937 Everest expedition, and Mr. Gould did not want to upset them at a time when they had many important political problems to deal with. As a preliminary, he said I might go over to Kalimpong and see if Rajah Tobgay could give me permission himself, and, if not, what prospects there were of the Maharajah of Bhutan allowing me to go.

I went to Kalimpong next day and met Rajah Tobgay and told him my plans. He was very sympathetic, but said that he could not give me

permission himself though he was almost sure the Maharajah would have no objection. He agreed to dispatch a runner up to Punakha the next day, but it would be at least a fortnight before he could return. I then asked Rai Bahardur Norbhu, who had been our interpreter during the Lhasa Mission and knew all the intricacies of Tibetan mentality, whether he thought the Lhasa authorities would grant the desired permission. He said that it would certainly be necessary to get the sanction of the Cabinet, even though I would approach through Bhutan, as Chomolhari is the most holy mountain in Tibet and in so far as Buddhist opinion was concerned no political frontiers could make it anything but wholly Tibetan. So anxious are the Tibetans to propitiate the goddess of the holy mountain that several religious processions go up each year to the foothills, and there are important monasteries on its lower slopes. Indeed, he thought it was quite possible that the Tibetans might refuse permission altogether, even to someone who was well known to them.

As soon as I returned to Gangtok, the P.O. sent a telegram to Richardson at Lhasa asking him to try to secure permission unless he thought it was not diplomatically advisable. Richardson replied after a few days that he thought permission might eventually be given but that he must await an auspicious moment before approaching the Regent or Cabinet. At this stage it seemed so improbable that the



CHOMOLHARI FROM THE PHARI ROAD (*taken Feb. 1937*)

expedition would materialise that I very nearly lost heart and returned at once to England in time to start teaching again at the beginning of the summer term. On May 1st I went over to Kalimpong to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Odling and to make as many preparations as I could in the absence of permission either from Lhasa or Bhutan.

I had met a young man called Charles Crawford who was working for Imperial Chemicals in Calcutta, and I wrote asking him if he would be able to join me. At first he thought it would be quite impossible for him to come, but a few days later, however, he wrote that he might be able to get leave on condition he was back in time to go up to Lahore before the end of the month. In answer to that I optimistically replied that a fortnight in all would be enough if we were not held up at all by bad weather or unexpected difficulties. Crawford had no Himalayan experience; indeed, except for some scrambling in Skye and in the Pyrenees, he had done no climbing whatsoever. On the other hand he was a person I liked very much indeed, and though he had been in Calcutta for some time he was young, and had kept himself very fit by playing hockey and other games. I thought that three was the ideal number, and I wanted to get somebody who had had more experience of Himalayan work than I had. As there was no one else available in Calcutta I wired to the local secretaries of the Himalaya Club at Simla and Darjeeling, and to R. L. Holdsworth,

then headmaster of Islamia College, Peshawar; we had made a winter ascent of Pitz Kesch together in 1930 (see page 31) and he had been with Smythe on Kamet in 1930. I also wired to J. A. K. Martyn, a master at the new Indian Public School at Dehra Dun. Then I rang up George Wood Johnson on his tea garden near Darjeeling. All these wished me luck but regretted that they could not get away.

The time was getting short: in view of Crawford's return to Calcutta before the end of the month, and the impending monsoon, it was essential that we should start in the first week in May. But still there was no word from Lhasa or Bhutan. I sent another wire to Richardson and he replied that all was going well, but that the Cabinet would not be hurried. Then I persuaded the P.O. to allow us to start. We could go up the Lhasa Trade Route and wait at Gnatong, just this side of the frontier, where there was a post office, until permission came through.

We were also short of equipment. I had my own high-climbing clothes left over from the previous year's climbing, but I had no tents of any description and no clothes or boots for the porters. So I telegraphed to Crawford telling him what equipment I was short of, and asking him to procure tents, ropes, stoves, crampons and high-climbing gear and ice-axes for himself and three porters. Most of this could be borrowed from the Himalayan Club's supply at Calcutta. Then I hired a small car and ran over to Darjeeling to choose the porters. By

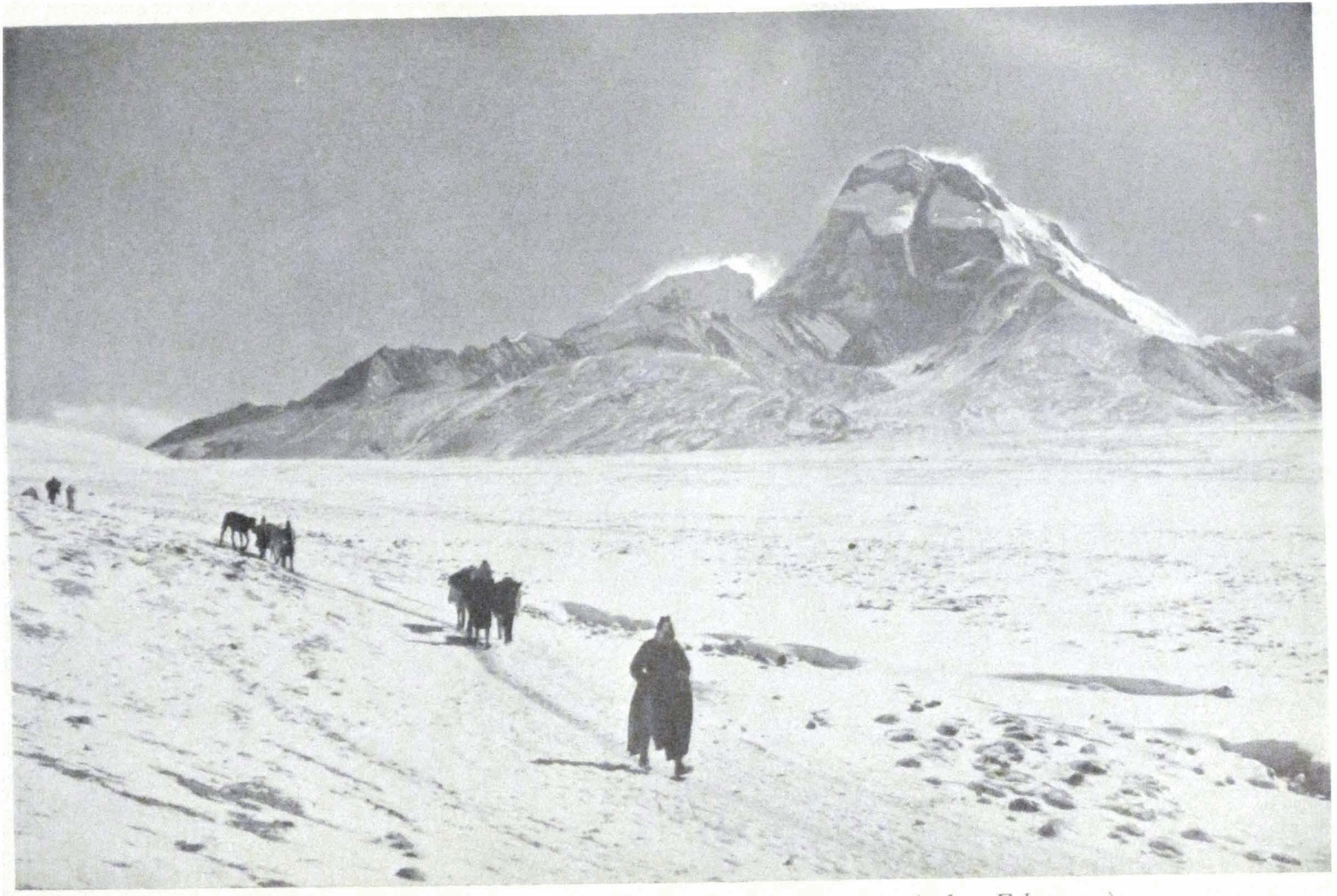
this time it was May 4th. I had previously written to Mr. Kidd at Darjeeling, the local secretary of the Himalayan Club, asking him to have three Sherpas ready in the event of my being able to secure permission. I told him that, if possible, I wanted experienced men who would be able to do their share of step-cutting and who would know something about route finding.

Mr. Kidd had picked out several. Of these I chose three. Nima Tendrup, the "old soldier" who was familiar to me from Frank Smythe's books: a man now well over forty, a quiet, thick-set, genial-looking man with a wonderful record. He had been up Kamet with Smythe and on two Kangchenjunga and three Everest expeditions. He, if anybody, would be able to give advice when necessary. Then I chose Kikuli, a young man who had been on the 1934 German expedition to Nanga Parbat, and whose record showed him to be a competent ice-climber. Then there was Pasang, a very young and rather dour-looking porter who was obviously so keen to come that I had not the heart to refuse him, especially as the three were friends and anxious to work together. I hoped that Nima, who was supposed to be a tiger for carrying weights, would come a certain way up the mountain and help me to choose the route and I expected that Kikuli would go highest; Pasang, I regarded as the weakest of the three. Just as I had made the final arrangements about wages and the porters had signed the agree-

ment with a thumb-print, who should turn up but old Ang Nima with whom I had climbed on the Zemu Glacier and in Lhonak the year before. He was terribly disappointed not to be included in the party, but I knew from experience that he failed to acclimatise and suffered badly at altitudes over 20,000 feet, though he was an excellent fellow and a very hard worker. I arranged for the porters to meet us at Gangtok in two days' time, insisting that they should go by Namchi to avoid the malarial Teesta Valley.

Crawford could not get away from Calcutta until the evening of May 5th as he had to spend a whole day there running about procuring all the odd things I had put down on my list. It was difficult for him getting boots and windproofs for three porters whose size he had no idea of; as it turned out, they already had most of the necessaries from their previous expeditions, but I could not rely on this.

We spent most of May 6th sorting our gear on the lawn of the Odling's house at Kalimpong. These kind people had put their house at our disposal and gave us all possible encouragement and assistance. It was an odd assortment of equipment. We had one big marquee of a tent, without a ground-sheet, which weighed over 30 lbs.; it would do as a base camp tent or for the extra porters we would have to take on from Phari. Then there were two excellent Mummery tents with ground-sheets sewn in, 7 feet by 5 and 5 feet high, and a tiny bivouac tent which



CHOMOLHARI FROM THE SUMMIT OF TANG LA (*taken Feb. 1937*)

relied on ice-axes for poles. Crawford said there was another of these available in Calcutta, so I wired for it to be sent on to Phari. The crampons were all enormous but we took them. Then we went down to Kalimpong store and ordered our provisions. We could get all we wanted there except pemmican and meta fuel, but luckily Crawford had been able to get enough of these in Calcutta. When we had packed up everything there was nothing more we could do except to work out the expedition's accounts, fortunately a very simple matter, for the actual cost of the expedition was phenomenally low. This was due to the simplicity of our methods and because the equipment was either left over from Pallis' expedition or borrowed from the Himalayan Club. Including the porters' wages and unlimited cigarettes for them, food, transport, photography, bungalow expenses and what little equipment we had to buy, the expedition cost Crawford and me only £19 : 12 : 6 each. I have great satisfaction in the thought that we reached a height of 24,000 feet at a cost of under £20 each, while the Everest expedition which was being carried on at the same time was unable to get higher than 23,000 feet in spite of the expenditure of several thousand pounds. I remember I wrote to Jack Longland that night telling him of our optimistic project: it was with him that I had done my first serious climb—the Meije.

We had a hilarious farewell dinner that night, and Mr. Odling produced an enormous pressure cooker

like a diving helmet with a steering wheel and various valves attached; apparently Eric Shipton had left it there a year ago and was reported to have said that he would rather be without his sleeping-bag than a pressure cooker in the Himalayas. However, the thing was prodigiously heavy and we felt it was hardly in keeping with our modestly equipped expedition. Such an apparatus is useful, owing to the fact that at an altitude of over 25,000 feet water boils at about 70° F. so one's food does not cook and indigestion results; but this cooker would have needed a special porter to itself, so we had to leave it behind.

On May 7th we got up at 4 o'clock and after a hurried breakfast packed everything into the car and got away at 6. Crawford was sick most of the way to Gangtok, only recovering when we started the final climb. There was an unusual number of bullock carts on the road, and as it is impossible to pass them except in certain places the journey took us some time. The last part of the journey exerted its usual fascination, and our spirits rose as we climbed higher. Everywhere there were bright colours. The rice in the steeply terraced paddy-fields was of a quick green just ready for planting out. Vivid birds flew across the road, gay butterflies hovered over patches of moisture. The weather was fine, though the snows were invisible and clouds hung low over the Natu La.

As time was so short we had decided to drive to Gangtok and to use the Natu La route rather than

the longer Jelep La, although the telegraph line follows the latter pass. When we reached Changu we planned to cross over to Gnatong where we would await the long-delayed permission. We reached the Residency at 10 o'clock and had much to do before we could get away. All the loads had to be made up both for porters and baggage animals. We found we had to take four mules and an extra one for fodder. There was a detention allowance to pay as the animals had been ordered for the day before, and Pasang had a black eye from some scrap in the bazaar. We did not make the porters carry much more than their own possessions as we wanted to save them for more energetic work beyond Phari. The mules and porters were off by 2 P.M. but it was two hours later before we were ready to start. Mr. Gould was away, but he gave us the run of the Residency and told us we could take anything we could persuade the cook to let us have. Here we did fairly well; he produced a 15-lb. bag of pulled bread (an ideal farinaceous food for climbing which is made by half-baking dough and then pulling it into fragments and finishing it off in the oven. It is very easy and light to carry and does not get stale; the only objection is that it is rather hard). We also got a cooked shoulder of mutton, two cakes, and some vegetables.

We wore shorts and climbing-boots, and carried our ice-axes as they are so awkward to pack. We had one rucksack of about 30 lbs. between us, to

accustom ourselves to loads, as we expected to carry heavy ones in the mountains. It rained hard as we climbed the steep cobbled track behind the Residency on our way to Karponang, the first dak bungalow, a distance of ten miles. On the way we saw an exquisite rainbow with a paler reflection beneath. As a rule one sees only sky through the transparent light of a rainbow, but here we looked through a band of multi-coloured light at the forest, from the top of the pass far above us, to the distant foot of the deep Rongni Chu valley, an effect so surpassingly strange that it almost seemed worth while turning aside to search for the Crock of Gold at the rainbow's end.

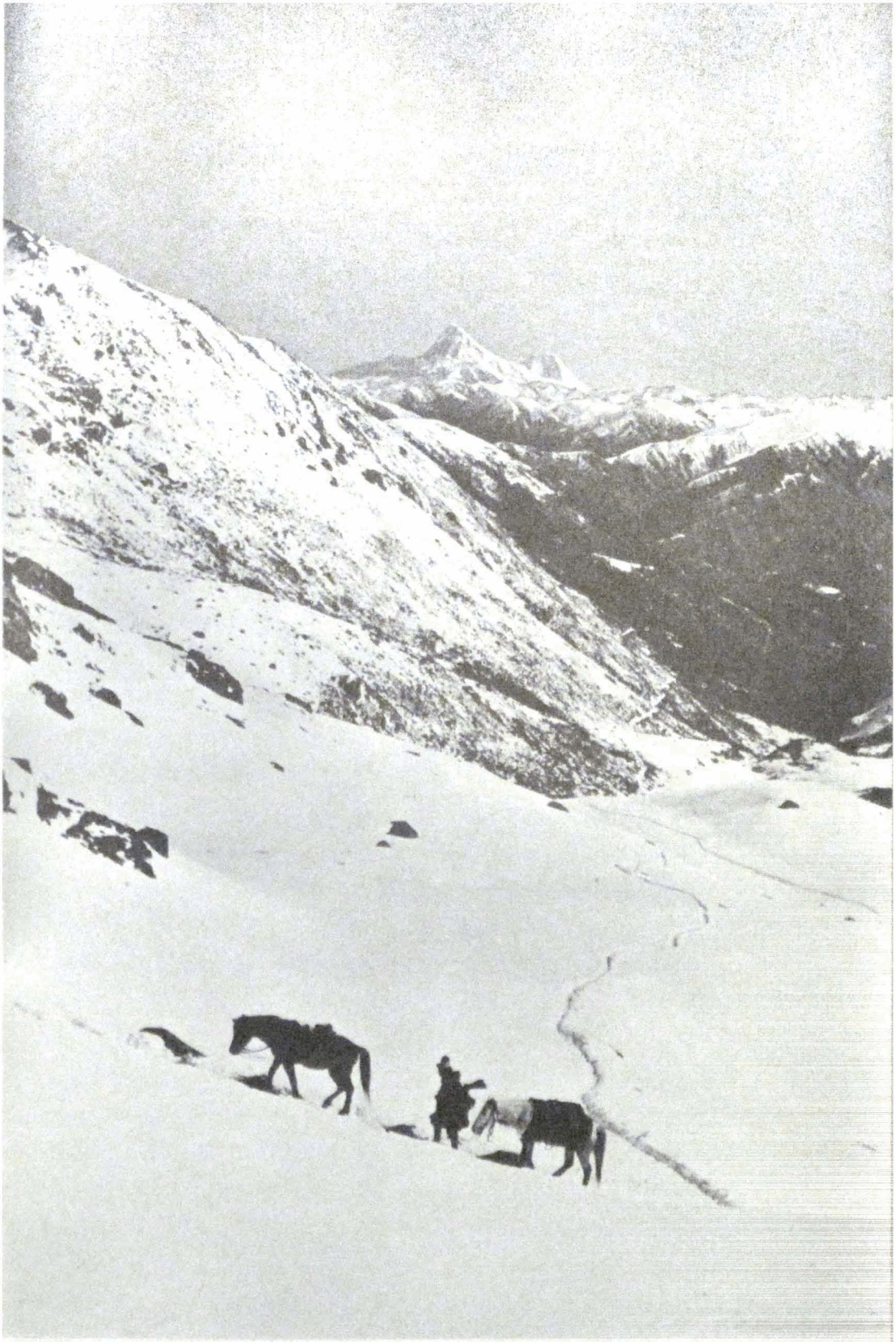
The Natu La approach to the mountains is very different from the Lachen one; here we rose almost at once out of the thick forest and as the track traverses high up on the edge of the valley one does not have the sense of oppression and hostility that is so strong in the Teesta Valley. We had underestimated the distance to Karponang and I was feeling ill, so it was long after dark when we reached the bungalow in pouring rain at 8.30. Just before the final climb to the bungalow we had a wonderful view down to the fairy lights of Gangtok spread along the ridge, and far away to the south-west we could see the twinkling lights of Darjeeling. There were several other people in the bungalow but luckily it is one of the largest and we had a room to ourselves. Nima proved himself a good cook and an excellent

servant. That night there was a succession of thunderstorms, and next morning several inches of fresh snow lay on the track. It was a curious day with thin driving mist over the tops, a blue sky directly above and packs of heavy cumulus cloud in the valleys. This most spectacular part of the track crept round vertical rock faces supported on crazy bamboo scaffolding, and zigzagged up to the Lagyap La at the beginning of the pine zone. All day long, mules, donkeys and yaks passed us carrying bales of coarse wool down to Gangtok, and the cheerful faces of their drivers reminded us how far we were away from the depressing plains of India.

As we reached Changu Lake at 12,000 feet, a hailstorm came on and slushy snow covered the ground. Part of the lake was still frozen over and the whole place looked unutterably desolate and cold. We reached the bungalow at 1.30. Up here we were beyond the tree line; only rhododendrons, azaleas and birch scrub covered the hillsides. As it was snowing hard we were very surprised to hear thunder in the afternoon, but in the evening it cleared and there was a grand view from the bungalow down on to the lake, which was clear black where the open water was and opaque where it was still frozen. The dark wooded hillsides ran down to the head of the lake just where it appeared to tumble over into the valley, and beyond was a triangle of vivid primrose light in the sky with almost luminous heads of coppery cumulus cloud showing away down by Gangtok.

At Changu we repacked all the boxes so that three out of the four mule loads need not be unpacked till Phari. In the evening we climbed the ridge to the west of the camp and looked down into a great amphitheatre of rocky hills with a river rising in the centre. Away to the north-west a shaft of evening sunlight lit up an amethyst-coloured hill silhouetted and rising out of a level sea of clouds; later on the sky cleared and before we turned in we saw Orion slanting across the V of sky beyond the lake and Sirius preternaturally bright overhead. The reflections in the lake seemed even brighter than the stars themselves. That evening some muleteers arrived from the Natu La and we heard from them that the road across to Kopup and Gnatong, where we were to await our permits, was under snow and impassable, so we would be forced to cross the Natu La into Tibet and await our permits at Yatung, where the Natu La and the Jelep La meet.

We both slept rather badly at Changu. As has often been remarked, it seems to be at a critical height, and people who come up too quickly from Gangtok usually pay for it here. After porridge and an omelette we were away at 6 o'clock, making an early start because we particularly wanted to get a view of Chomolhari from the top of the Natu La. There was new snow on the path and for some distance we followed the tracks of a hill fox. Rhododendron scrub stretched all along the track but it was not yet in flower; in fact it was still winter up



CHOMOLHARI FROM THE NATU LA (*taken Feb. 1937*)

here. The big valley that comes up to the Natu La from the south was full of swirling brown cloud. At the foot of the steep climb to the pass there was a signpost to Kopup, but there was a yard of snow on the track and nothing had passed that way for some time. On the way up the pass I felt very ill and had all the symptoms of mountain sickness. If this was so, it was surprising, as I had only recently spent six months at 12,000 feet and during that time had often been much higher; Crawford, on the other hand, felt perfectly fit at this stage, but succumbed later.

There was absolutely no view from the summit of the pass. We could see only the line of cairns festooned with bright-coloured prayer flags marking the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet. It was bitterly cold, and all the stones and blades of grass were plastered with ice and snow. Our mules passed us here: they had come up the pass at a very good speed in spite of their loads. Near the summit a train of fifty mules laden with wool met us, and a party of Tibetans with their household goods on the backs of unfortunate donkeys, one of which was so overloaded that it collapsed every few yards. On the far side the sun suddenly shone through, and an aromatic fragrance came up to us from miles and miles of azalea bushes. The descent was very steep and I was feeling so ill that I had to stop and lie down every now and then. I had a terrible pain behind the eyes and suffered from diarrhoea and vomiting. We stopped at Champithang instead of

going straight on to Yatung as we had intended and I crawled into my sleeping-bag at once.

On May 10th we reached Yatung, a village of the same size and character as Lachen, but at the foot of a valley instead of being perched up on the side. The track down from Champithang took us through a beautiful landscape and we had occasional backward glimpses above the lichen-clad pines to the Natu La with a snowy peak on either side. Every now and then there were grassy clearings like Swiss alps where yaks grazed placidly among masses of mauve *primula denticulata* with spherical flowering heads as big as golf balls, and the more sedate *primula sikkimensis* with pendant cream-coloured flowers. There was also a dark-violet primula with a yellow centre and a tiny pink one with shiny leaves. Everywhere the grass was crushed and pressed down, a reminder of the recently melted snow. From the grassy slope above Kargyu Monastery we had a view up the wide Amo Chu: trim fields green with young barley in the bottom of the valley and clusters of grey wooden houses like Swiss chalets; on the west the Jelep La came in to meet our track at Pipitang where the river is bridged. Just below the monastery we saw some monks chopping wood, and among them I recognised the old Abbot whose acquaintance I had made on the way up to Lhasa; I was surprised to see him wielding an axe. When I told him we were hoping to climb Chomolhari, he roared with laughter and then

suddenly became serious and asked me why. My Tibetan was hardly up to this, so I said it was to see the goddess there. He shook his head sadly and said we would have to be very careful or she would throw us down the mountain. Then he said he had been up there often, but I presume he meant only in the spirit.

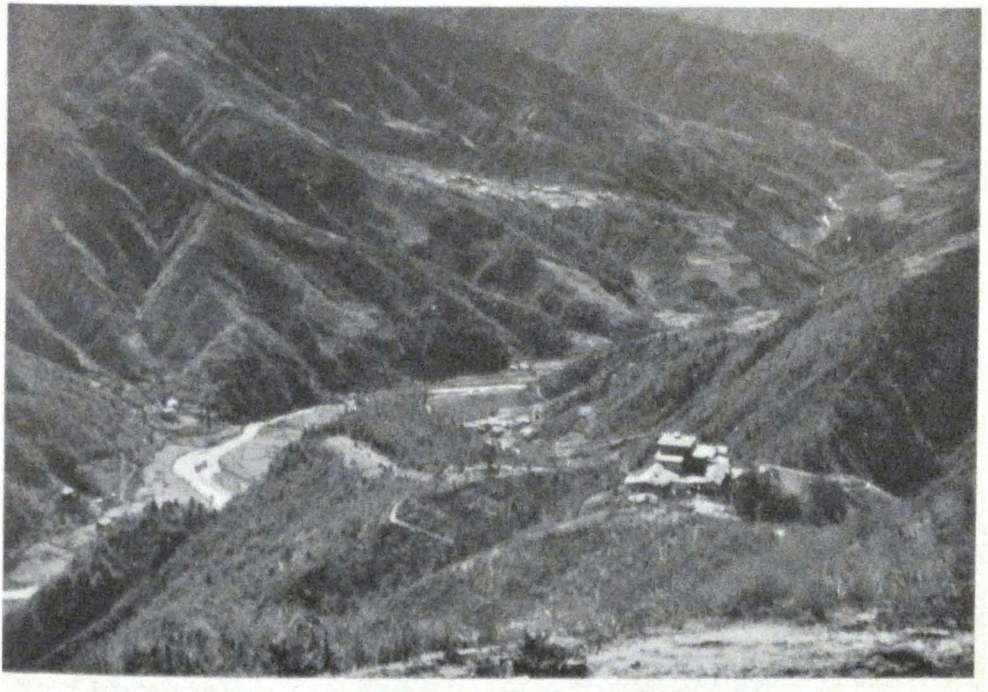
At Pipitang there is a square *chorten*, or religious edifice, surrounded by cylindrical drums of prayers which the pious turn as they walk round and thus acquire merit. It is important always to have them on the right, otherwise it is very inauspicious. We very nearly passed this one on the wrong side, but luckily an old man pointed out our mistake and made us go back. Just beyond the bridge are some tall prayer-poles with bundles of auspicious yak-tails attached to the summit. In the Chumbi Valley there are many evidences of the Buddhist religion; not only is it on the direct route to Lhasa, but traders about to brave the Jelep La or Natu La like to appease the gods in all possible ways. The Chumbi Valley, quite unlike other parts of Tibet, thrusts its way southward between Sikkim and Bhutan, and as all the trade between Lhasa and Eastern India passes this way the people are very prosperous. Since the trade agreement of 1910 we have had power to keep a British Trade Agent at Yatung and a small detachment of Indian troops as an escort.

Down in the valley there were bronze-winged

turtle-doves and hoopoes in the fields and white wagtails and dippers beside the river. Just before we reached Lachen there was a large *chorten* beside the road surrounded by tall prayer-poles; soon after this we crossed the bridge and went up to the dak bungalow. Here I found my friend Captain Morgan, who had been the doctor on the Lhasa Mission, bandaging up the legs of an American bacteriologist who had crossed the Natu La in socks and shorts and was suffering from severe sunburn: all the skin had been blistered off his legs. The next move was to visit the postmaster, who told me there were two telegrams and two letters for me at Gnatong. We waited anxiously while copies of them were telegraphed along the line. It would have been terrible to have had to go straight home having got so far—but all was well: one was from Mr. Gould, wishing us luck and saying that the Tibetans had no objection to our attempting Chomolhari and that we could go on as far as Yatung or Phari and there await Bhutanese permission. The other telegram was from Rajah Tobgay: he also wished us luck and said that the Maharajah of Bhutan had given his consent.

This happened to be my thirtieth birthday and no present could possibly have been more welcome. We wanted to push on to Phari the same day, but Yatung represents the end of the transport stage from Gangtok and our muleteer would go no further, and try as we might we could not get the Yatung

YATUNG



KARGYU MONASTERY AND THE YATUNG VALLEY

muleteers to start until the following morning. This was really a good thing, because we would have been over-tired had we gone any further that day, and it meant that we could go and have lunch with Captain and Mrs. Morgan at the British Trade Agent's house where they were staying. Before turning in we went for a walk up the hillside above Yatung and looked down to the drifting smoke and fluttering prayer-flags above the grey shingled roofs of the village. We wondered what the weather was like on Chomolhari.

On May 11th the sunshine crept down the Amo Chu Valley to the north-east, then suddenly appeared over the summit of the mountains on the opposite side of the valley. Our five ponies appeared at 7 o'clock and after breakfast of porridge and rumble-tumble (scrambled eggs) we were on the road by 8. The track followed the river for some time, past the ruins of an old fort put up by the Chinese and a small hamlet surrounded by very fertile fields where young barley sprouted, then it began to rise through thickly wooded country until we found ourselves at Ling-matan, a wide level expanse of green turf dotted with black yak-hair tents and with a peaceful river meandering through it. Hundreds of yaks were grazing on the level pasture and all round it the rocky fir-clad hills sloped steeply up to snow-scattered upland pastures. A mesh of alto-cumulus cloud hung aslant a deep blue sky.

Charles and I bathed in a deep pool of the river,

and Kikuli—much to our surprise—followed our example. Nima stayed behind with the ponies to make sure they kept up and that no one tampered with our precious gear. On the 1933 Everest expedition about £100 worth of food and clothing were stolen from the boxes, and stones were cunningly substituted to make up the weight. We had brought absolutely nothing in excess of our needs, and the loss of anything would have been fatal to the success of the expedition. The track soon dived into the forest again and on the left was the old Tibetan Government mint. They had built it down in the forest where plenty of fuel was available, but they found it too remote from official supervision and now the mint is at Lhasa.

We reached Gautsa bungalow at 1 o'clock, intending to push on to Phari, but we were secretly very relieved when Nima came up an hour later with the ponies and said that they could not possibly go any further. We had done twelve miles, mostly uphill, and it was a good seventeen on to Phari, as well as a considerable rise in altitude. The Gautsa valley is sullen and forbidding; it reminded me of the Pass of Glencoe. For the last few miles great rugged slopes had appeared to shut in the valley at each turn so that it looked as if there was no escape for the track, but each time we turned at right angles into another V-shaped opening overhung by rock precipices and boulder-strewn scree slopes. Up above us lammergeyers and grey vul-

tures were soaring in wide circles, surprised at their meal on an unfortunate mule whose carcase lay beside the track.

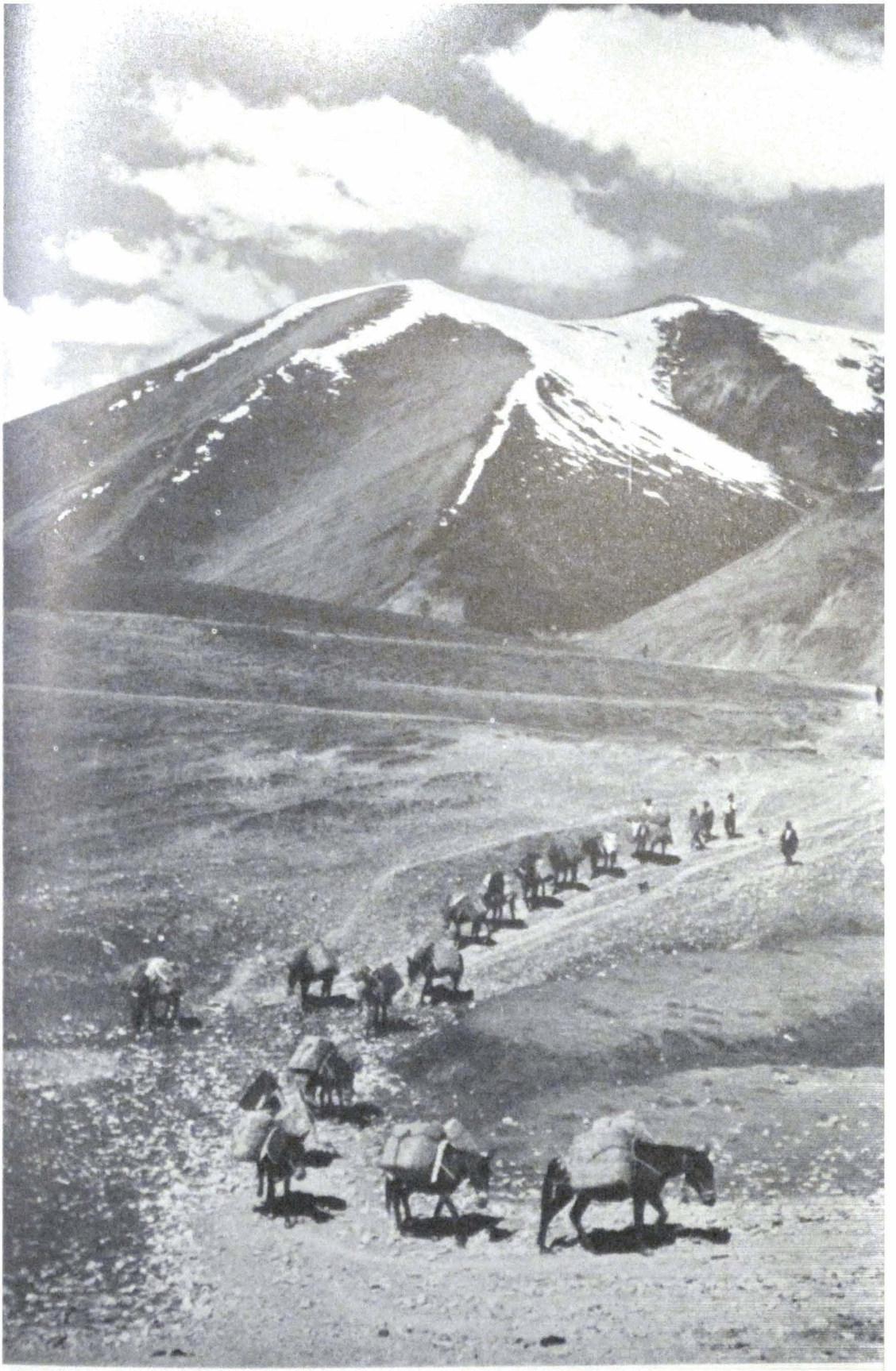
Gautsa is a gloomy and sinister place, but Nima cheered us up by producing a supper of herrings (tinned) and chips, followed by fried cake and custard. I gave Kikuli some quinine for his cold and the other two porters insisted on having some too. All the people here looked at us with awestruck expressions when the porters told them we were going to attempt Chomolhari, as if they knew that some frightful retribution was in store for us, or as if we were attempting what they knew perfectly well to be utterly impossible. We both slept very badly that night, and Crawford felt ill all the way to Phari.

We left Gautsa at 5 A.M. and soon emerged from the gorge and traversed along the steep side of a wide grassy valley. On the right a great waterfall, still half frozen, dropped from a tributary valley to meet the main stream. On the grassy uplands we could see innumerable yaks grazing, and on the steeper hillsides small parties of burrhal. In the gorge we heard whistling thrushes and sudden bursts of song from a wren. There were white-capped and plumbeous redstarts by the stream and willow-warblers in the thickets. The rhododendrons were not yet out, but there was a pink daphne in flower with a hyacinthine scent, and at least six different kinds of primula.

Suddenly turning a corner, the white pyramid of

Chomolhari appeared dramatically framed by the steep green sides of the valley. We stopped and examined the southern arête carefully with glasses. The Sherpas were optimistic; it certainly did not look impossibly steep, but an ominous plume of snow trailing from the summit showed that we must not expect calm weather. Soon the track passed a cairn of stones hung with prayer-flags, and then the valley opened out to the level rolling plateau of the real Tibet, and we were met by an icy wind blowing from the snow-clad peaks that surround the plain. The wild life had completely changed. Here were the Tibetan skylark and Elwes' horned lark with black and white head, mouse hares and various species of snow and mountain finches. Kites circled overhead and three black-necked cranes were screaming away on the right. In the distance we could see a herd of kiang, the rare wild ass of Tibet, racing across the plain.

The track across the plain to Phari seemed interminable, and Crawford was feeling the effects of the height. In the clear Tibetan atmosphere the great fort of Phari and the mud walls of the village looked much nearer than they really were. It was not until after midday that we reached the bungalow, and never have I been more grateful for a cup of tea and a rest. We remembered it was May 12th, Coronation Day, and as we were sleeping in the same building as the highest post office in the world I thought of dispatching to Their Majesties a telegram of con-



PACK-MULES ON THE LHASA-INDIA HIGHWAY A FEW MILES SOUTH OF PHARI

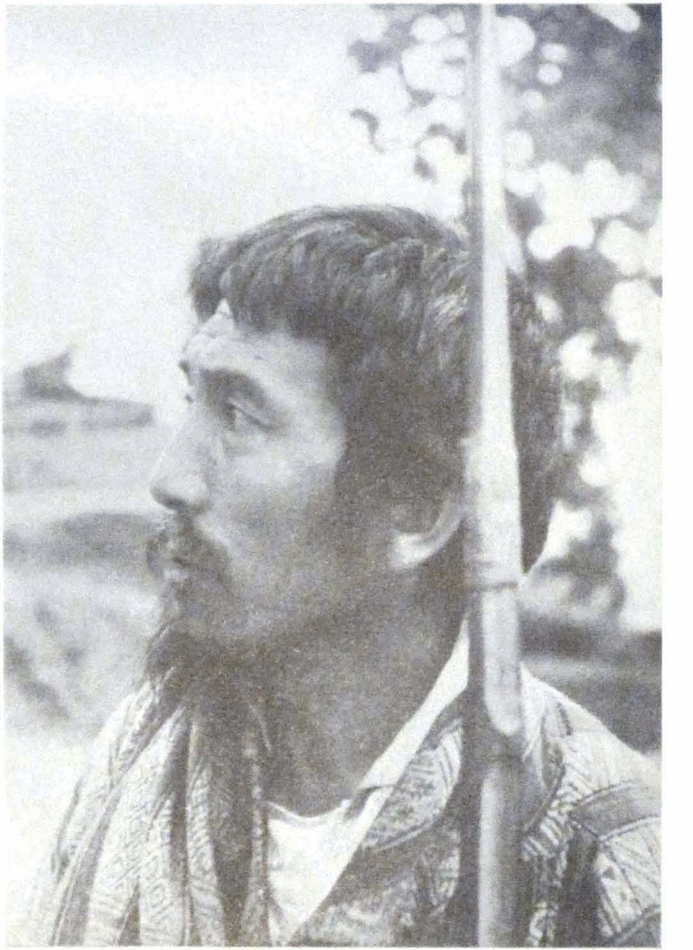
gratulation, but when we went into the figures we found it would come to almost as much as the total cost of the expedition. After lunch I felt much revived, so I went up the rounded stony hills to the north to see if I could get a view of the approaches to Chomolhari. The maps of the district were only the roughest approximation, and I felt that our chief difficulty would be to get on to the ridge at all. Unfortunately the clouds came down when I had reached about 17,500 feet and I had to return without having discovered anything except that I was better acclimatised than I had ever been before.

Up in the hills I saw a grey Tibetan wolf, several blue hares, and two marmots sitting up outside their holes. There were also several varieties of small mauve and pink primulas of species I had not hitherto seen. I collected some of the seedlings and sent them to Mrs. Odling at Kalimpong, but I heard later that they did not take root, although some of the seeds I sent to the Botanical Gardens at Edinburgh have actually flowered. As I returned I met the women of Phari coming out to fill their wooden water-buckets at the stream that flows from the hills to the village. Phari has the reputation of being the filthiest village in the world, and certainly these black-faced, tousle-haired women did little to belie that reputation. However, they were all very cheerful and friendly. I went across to the village but was so besieged by beggars that I had to retire. I thought of the description of Phari written by

Thomas Manning, a friend of Charles Lamb, who passed this way in 1811: "Dirt, dirt, grease, smoke," he wrote, "misery, but good mutton." Changes come very slowly to Tibet, and Phari is just the same today, except that the fort which must have been an impressive building in his day was practically destroyed by the 1904 expedition to Lhasa.

In the evening the village headman came in to present a scarf of greeting, and I arranged that he should provide six stalwart coolies for the next day at 1 rupee each. I hoped that they would carry most of our gear towards the ridge so as to save the Sherpas for more serious work. The summit of Chomolhari is only ten miles in a straight line from Phari and I hoped to get to the foot of the southern arête in a single day. The headman tried to dissuade us from our attempt. He said that the people at Phari had been discussing the matter and they were very anxious—not from any fear that the mountain would be desecrated, for the mountain was quite unclimbable, any fool could see that—no, it was for our safety that they feared. Then he went on to warn us about the goddess—or rather goddesses, I think there were. They would not allow us to approach the summit and if we were to go too near, he solemnly warned us, they would most certainly hurl us down. Then he warned us about *mi-go* (snow men) who were known to inhabit the northern valleys of Bhutan, and he told us a long story of some Phari traders who had lost their way on the Tremo

A VILLAGE HEADMAN WEARING AMULETS



A BHUTANESE ARCHER

La (the pass from Phari into Bhutan) in a snow-storm, and how they had seen the tracks of the snow men and two of the party had disappeared in the night and had never been heard of since. These solemn warnings were becoming rather disquieting —what if there were some truth in them after all?

That evening we sent Nima to the bazaar to buy a small mirror, some safety pins and a few yards of tape—the only things we had forgotten; then we checked over the tents, tested the primus stoves, darned our socks and saw that everything was in order.

When all was ready for the morrow, we sat by the juniper-wood fire in the dak-bungalow and examined the Survey of India quarter-inch sheet 78 E, the only available map. According to that, we had only one ridge to cross before reaching our arête. We allowed one day for that, three days to the summit, if it was to be climbed at all, and two days for the return journey: exactly a week, allowing for one day's bad weather. Then the bungalow watchman came in, a handsome Tibetan with a long pigtail and heavy gold and turquoise ear-ring. He bustled about tidying up the room and putting more logs on the fire. Then he turned to us and said very seriously, "You are young. Chomolhari cannot possibly be climbed. You may not return at all. Why not give it up and return to Yatung, where it is already summer?" Why not? I could not answer him.

CHAPTER TEN

Chomolhari: the Ascent

On May 13th we got up at 4.45 to find an inauspicious morning with damp, cold mist right down to the bungalow. After fried eggs and porridge for breakfast, we sorted all our gear: the large boxes to be left in charge of the watchman while the rest was made into six coolie loads of 80 lbs each. Nima and I, carrying little beyond my cameras, were to go on ahead to climb a hill from which we should get a view of the approaches to Chomolhari. Crawford was to follow with Kikuli and Pasang, who would carry about 50 lbs. each. Just as we started, soon after 7 A.M., the clouds parted and we saw Chomolhari, still in deep, cold shadow, with the sun lighting up a plume of silver cloud trailing from the summit, and rags of ugly looking cumulus blowing up from the west.

As we crossed the stream, where the women of Phari were already filling their water-buckets, Nima and I saw six Brahminy ducks flying noisily over us from the south, and very high up we saw a buzzard with pale head and tail, several vultures and the usual horned larks and snow finches. We went towards the Chomolhari monastery and followed the stream up from there. I had intended to visit

the monastery and to persuade the Abbot to give us some prayer-flags to put on the summit, but such a visit would have cost us more time than we could afford. Up the valley was a small shallow lake of four acres or so, and beside it a nomad's black tent and yaks. Three mastiffs rushed fiercely out, followed by a very black-faced yak-herd, who saluted us with one arm half stretched out and the other supporting its elbow. Leaving a note for Crawford on the top of a pile of stones, we turned left up an extremely steep hill covered with boulders.

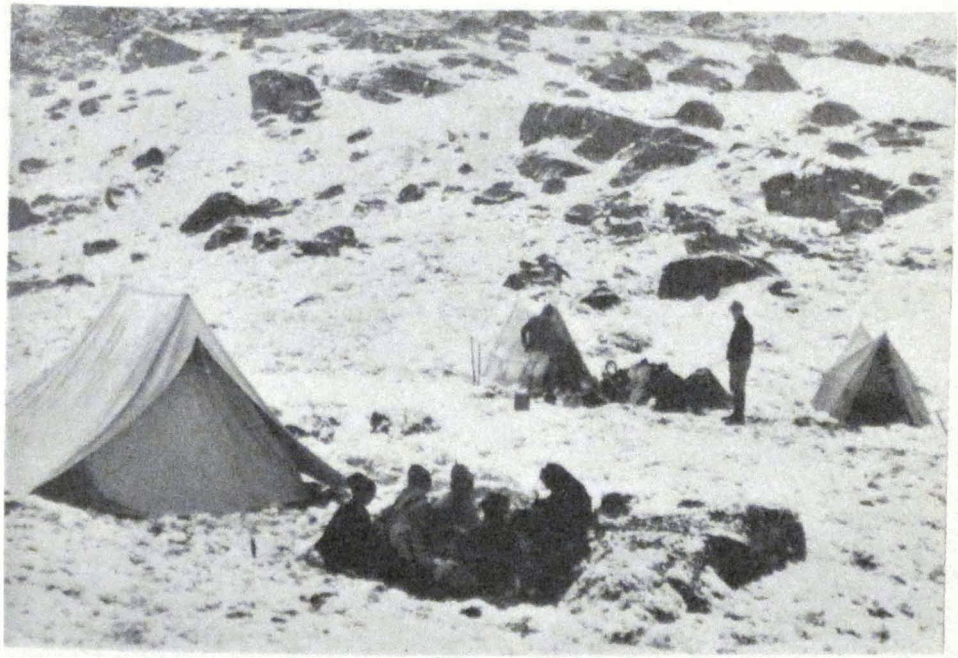
It was impossible to see anything of Chomolhari, so we sheltered in the lee of some boulders, hoping it would clear, then gave it up and descended on the far side of the hill into a big rocky amphitheatre, very similar in size and character to the Crib Goch ridge on Snowdon. Here I was relieved to see the others for the first time since we had left Phari. In the finer intervals we caught disquieting glimpses of pinnacled hills and precipitous glaciers between us and Chomolhari. It was quite obvious that it was impossible to get any nearer from this side; apparently we should have to keep further south. The valley we were in was enclosed by a steep rocky ridge with a difficult high col to the north and another easier one to the east which might prove impassable on the other side, and in any case were rather difficult for laden porters. As there was nothing to be done until it cleared, we camped in hail and mist at 12.30, after putting up the big tent

for the coolies and the two Mummery tents for ourselves and the Sherpas. The coolies were very cheerful; they pulled azalea scrub to light a fire, and produced an amazing pair of goatskin bellows which had to be used incessantly to keep it going. As we were both rather weary and disappointed we had some food and went to sleep, to be woken half an hour later by a thunderstorm and gale of wind.

This seemed to clear the weather and the clouds were rising, so Crawford and I put our boots on again and set off to see what happened over the ridge to the south-east. On the way, much to our surprise, we found a *primula Royalei*, protruding through the new snow, and the mauve primula with the white eye, also the dried stalks of *mecanopsis horridula* (blue poppy). There was easy going up scree slopes, then it flattened out above and a faint track led over an easy col. The head of the valley on the far side of the ridge was still full of cloud, but we could see down into a disquietingly wide deep gorge, and to the blue wooded valleys of Bhutan. In order to see if there was a more direct route from our camp we climbed to the crest of the ridge and followed it northward round the head of the valley where our camp was. As the snow and loose rock made the climbing precarious we did not attempt the last part of the ridge round to the other col, but made a very interesting descent down a snow couloir direct to our camp, which we reached at dusk.

The coolies were chattering and singing shrilly

KIKULI, PASANG AND CRAWFORD



OUR FIRST CAMP. PHARI PORTERS PREPARING THEIR BREAKFAST

with queer catches of the breath and gasps rather like Eskimo singing. It was perfectly still now and the setting sun shone through a coppery haze which looked as if another storm were brewing. In the stillness we could hear an intermittent roaring noise in the direction of Chomolhari as if the wind was still vexing the higher slopes, or perhaps the new snow was pouring down in countless small avalanches. We decided to leave here the big tent, our trek boots and everything we could possibly do without and send them back to Phari with the returning coolies, who would come half a day's march with us. Then we would try to carry on with five loads. Chomolhari seemed a very forlorn hope at this stage, but we hoped our reconnaissance would be useful to somebody, though it would have been still more valuable, I reflected, if we had had survey gear with us.

It snowed quietly most of the night with a soft whispering sound on the tent-wall. We woke at 3.30, just as dawn was breaking, having slept well. I shouted to Nima, but he had some trouble with the primus and breakfast was not ready until 5, by which time we had packed up our gear. As we worked, a snow-cock was crowing like an old grouse from side to side of the valley, and a finch suddenly burst into song. There was ice inside the tent-wall and three inches of new snow outside, but it was still and clear. The rising sun shone red on the great mass of Pauhunri, on the other side of the Phari plain where

it rose like an island out of a sea of amethyst mist. A few minutes later the vision had disappeared and clouds came down to the tops of the hills around us and swept up the valley from the west.

As we ate our breakfast of porridge, rumble-tumble and tea, the coolies emerged frowstily from their tent and made a fire, then sat round it in the snow and ate tea and *tsamba*, as did the Sherpas. We sorted all our loads and put aside every ounce we could spare—the big tent and most of the pegs, a thermos, an extra ground-sheet, a torch, a few books and some odd clothes—but no food. After this sorting it was 7 o'clock before we got away, the Sherpas very cheerfully with small loads, and the Phari men somewhat despondently because their loads were heavy. I took some cinema film of them going up the steep slope we had reconnoitred previously as I intended to send the camera back with the coolies. There was a foot of snow here, pitted with tiny tracks, probably of mouse-hares, and larger ones of mountain hares and foxes. On the summit we passed a line of small cairns at right angles to our track—the frontier between Tibet and Bhutan. This pass was a fairly easy one, the Sur La they called it, but only two of the Phari men had been over it before. We were in the clouds here, but could make out fairly level going to the right and a small lake covered with wet green slush. Our way led down into a steep rocky gorge. We built a few cairns in case we returned this way and after half an hour of

descent came on to a tolerable path with very fresh burrhal tracks on it. Now we were below the clouds and could see across to a steep rocky mountain side opposite, from which we were separated by a valley less deep than I had feared. Soon we came out on to a level 'grand-stand', so we stopped in the sun to let it clear below. Half left across the valley was a deep high ampitheatre lost in the clouds with the green and blue snouts of two hanging glaciers showing. It seemed that we could either go over these and hope to reach our arête that way, or cross the valley and traverse to the right round the hills on the far side, hoping that there would not be other valleys. We decided to try the former course and to fall back on the latter if it proved impossible.

Suddenly, as the last wisps of cloud dispersed below us, I saw a huge flock of burrhal in the valley bottom. There were about sixty of them, including some huge rams with great flowing horns, black breasts edged with white and black on the front of their legs. Many of them were lying down, secure from fear in this unfrequented place. Unfortunately, before I could prevent it, the porters rolled stones down, and the flock ran out of sight in the narrows of the valley. It reminded me of cinema films of animals in Africa taken from an aeroplane. Below us we could see the valley clad with rhododendrons and further down with pines and deodars where it joined the main valley which came in from the east. Our map knew nothing of all this, and

I wished again that we could have done some survey to justify the trip, but we could not possibly have afforded it, nor had we the time. We descended steeply over very rough ground to the valley bottom, then followed the stream up into a side valley on the east side surrounded by bottle-green hanging glaciers and steep bare rock slabs. The path petered out below, but was well marked up above. In the valley bottom I saw an Apollo butterfly and found all sorts of wild flowers—masses of purple primula, and a tiny clustered mauve one, also the red tamarisk and a yellow celandine-like flower. No snow lay here, and we seemed to be in a different world from the snow-covered camp we had left in the early morning. It was only 10 o'clock, but the Phari coolies had a long way to go and were anxious to start home. I paid them 2 rupees each, and 5 annas backsheesh in addition. They set off up the valley to the north where there is a pass, so they say, which is used by shepherds; it must come out near Chu-gya monastery. I sent all but one pair of the crampons back with them as it was skis we needed for all the new snow. We put up the two Mummery tents beside a small lake, and after a lunch of sardines, cake, bread and strawberry jam, we had a short sleep since it was impossible to make any decision until the visibility improved. In the afternoon it cleared a little and we could see that the glaciers flowed from a steep and much crevassed ice-field in the direction of Chomolhari. If we

could only reach that ice it might lead up on to our arête, otherwise we would have to go still further to the south.

At 12 o'clock we set off up the steep rock wall above the camp to reconnoitre and see if we could discover the lie of the country on the other side. On the way up we noticed dried rhubarb stalks sticking up among the dry grass like solitary fencing posts, a pipit was singing on the wing as it volplaned down, some choughs called as they somersaulted across the sky, and a pair of Hodgson's Grandula flashed blue and purple as they disappeared into a gully. After some most enjoyable climbing, we left the rock and for two hours we worked our way up steep soft new snow until we were stopped by some rocky outcrops and very awkward holdless slabs which led to the crest at about 19,000 feet. We kept north along the summit snow and rock ridge for half a mile. As the clouds lifted higher and higher, we could see down beneath them into the brown and purple valleys of Bhutan and across to the dun Phari plain through the pass our coolies had taken. Suddenly a rift appeared in the clouds to the north-east, and we saw Chomolhari far above us. The last 3000 feet looked practically impossible: a series of gigantic crevasses and apparently impassable ice-falls led to the almost perpendicular final ice slopes. I just had time to put on a yellow filter and take a photograph before the clouds closed down again and hid it. So beautiful and unexpected was

this vision that it was not until I developed the film that I was really sure we had not imagined it.

The ridge running up from the glacier above our camp to Chomolhari seemed to be quite impossible as it meets the southern arête at a lower level and is separated from it by a steep and turbulent ice-fall. To get on to the arête it appeared that we should have to coast round about four valleys and approach directly from the south. To the west of Chomolhari we could see a sharp needle-like peak of grey rock and ice which seemed surprisingly high. To this we gave the name of Khap-ri, the Tibetan word for a needle. We also caught a glimpse of Takapu, Chomolhari's neighbour to the east. After following a buttress of the ridge straight down, in spite of some difficulty, we reached our camp at 5.30 to find that Nima had supper ready—corned beef and potatoes fried up, followed by chocolate and cake. In the evening the clouds came down again and it started to snow and hail.

Next morning, May 15th, I lit the primus at 4 o'clock and called to the others. There was an inch of new snow over everything, but it was fine and clear in spite of occasional wisps of cloud. We could now see Khap-ri between our camp and Chomolhari, and a better view of the ice-fall convinced us that that route was impossible. Our breakfast of porridge, tea and fried tinned herrings was finished by 5, and we were packed up and away by 6 o'clock, intending to work our way round until

we reached our ridge, at the same time losing as little height as possible. We all carried heavy loads. Had I known what was ahead I should have kept the Phari men for another day at least. The Sherpas carried 80 or 90 lbs., while Crawford and I had 50 or 60, which is too much before a strenuous climb. We set off on the principle of walking for twenty minutes and then resting for ten, in order to husband our strength. Crawford wanted to go down into the valley and round, but I was opposed to losing any height, so we tried to traverse round the mountain-side, cutting across below the slabs we had climbed on the day before. But it was hard work carrying such heavy loads on rough going, and as after-events proved, we would have done better to have followed the stream down and approached Chomolhari by a track which we only discovered on our return a week later. We crossed our ridge by a low col, but clouds were already streaming over and we had only brief views back to the Crib Goch ridge and the Sur La, and to another pass further south.

It was almost impossible to keep any sense of direction in the mist which intermittently enveloped us, and with such heavy loads every yard was valuable. At last, coasting round three hillsides, without losing much height, we reached a rounded hill with a cairn on the summit. In front of us there was yet another deep valley to cross; but it appeared to be the last, and we could look across to our arête and to Chomolhari, which half cleared now and then so

that we could begin to prospect a route. The grassy ridge led up from the south to a rocky projection, which we called the Giant's Fang, marking the transition from rock to snow and ice. From this landmark a sharp but gently sloping ice-ridge led to irregular broken ice and a row of deep crevasses which cut across the saddle, leaving, so far as we could see, but one place where there was any possibility of a bridge. After these formidable defences, it rose in great broken slabs of ice and snow to the summit.

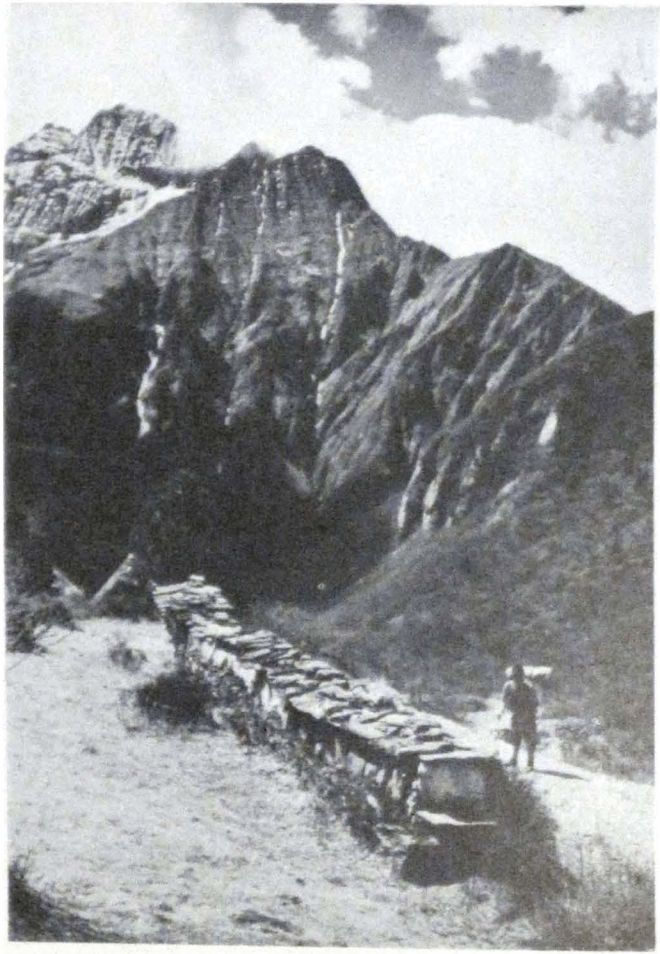
I ran down a little way and saw that the descent into the valley was gentle at first and then appeared to drop vertically. We would have to go yet further south before being able to cross the valley. As we started off down a steep grass slope broken by patches of juniper, we put up three burrhal which dashed across just below us. The lilac-coloured shrub with the sweet scent was common and also several kinds of primula, and a yellow potentilla. Our ridge flattened out to a low grassy col where there was a derelict shelter, and a path could be seen going westward over a low wooded col and then presumably into the valley where the large flock of burrhal were, and up a pass parallel to the Sur La, but south of it. Here, too, the track could be seen going right up over the hill.

From the grassy col in front of us our way fell abruptly through a thousand feet of dense rhododendron and birch trees, at an unusually steep angle.

A tiny path wound precipitously downward, so steep that we had to hold on to the bushes as we descended. Shell-pink and pale saffron-yellow rhododendrons were just breaking into flower, and when the track straightened out at the foot of the bluff we suddenly came upon several enormous patches of *primula Royalei* of violet-purple colour—a sight so beautiful that it made us forget the extreme discomfort of carrying heavy rucksacks down such a hill. In the valley, by the remains of an old barn, were three very vacant-looking yak-herds who gaped open-mouthed at us but said nothing at all. The valley flattened out as we emerged from the trees and a lovely trout stream wound through level fields of lush grass starred with flowers. Further up, the valley was at least a mile wide and overgrown with low willows covered with yellow catkins. The mauve primula with mealy leaves and a mass of bloom the size of a golf ball was very common, also the tiny pink one with shiny leaves. We took our rucksacks off and lay in the sun, thankful that we had reached our ridge at least, but uncertain whether we had the energy left to carry our loads to its summit. The sides of this valley were very steep and at the head of it the green and blue snouts of hanging glaciers showed through the mist.

There were some large juniper trees on the eastern side which, after crossing the stream by a rustic wooden bridge, we started to climb by a steep well-defined trail. Rather surprisingly, we came

to a *mané* wall about thirty yards long which we duly left on our right. A prayer wall is a familiar sight beside a much frequented track, but on this remote mountain side it struck an unfamiliar but not incongruous note. After a steep ascent the trees grew smaller and smaller, and we saw masses of the mauve primula and fields of a lovely blue iris with a short stem. Then we came over a ridge, which had the appearance of an ancient lateral moraine, into a horse-shoe valley. In this sheltered hollow there was a great abundance of wild flowers, especially primulas and iris, and well-fed marmots sat outside their burrows in the sun. A steep climb took us up to a spring 200 feet from the top of the ridge—our ridge, at last. We stopped to rest and examine a pale-yellow primula which grew beside the spring and watched a buzzard soaring and mewing. Suddenly there was a tremendous roaring, whizzing noise and a golden eagle rushed down with half-closed wings and the two birds hurled themselves about the sky, chasing each other in play or anger. All at once the eagle swooped off down the valley and the little buzzard had to use his wings vigorously to keep up. When we could first see over the ridge into the valley further east, we noticed a green lake about a mile in circumference, and to my surprise and delight there were four tufted duck on it. Some yaks gazed at us amazedly on the ridge, and a chough came down and settled on the back of one of them. From up here we had a superb view down



PRAYER WALL ON THE WAY UP TO CHOMOLHARI

CHORTEN AND PRAYER FLAGS

into a wide pine-filled valley of Bhutan and across to a great pyramid mountain with terraces of brown rock. There was sunshine while we rested beside the spring, then clouds came down, and by 2.30, when we were fairly well up our ridge, we were again in the mist. I had hoped to camp just short of the snow-line, but Crawford was feeling the height and the porters were going slower and slower; Nima especially, having smoked cigarettes incessantly, was scarcely able to walk ten yards without a rest, so we stopped near a stream and put up the tents. Possibly our exhaustion was due to the fact that we had not eaten enough. At that height one's appetite often fails, but it is most important to eat, especially when carrying heavy loads, and even to suck a bit of barley-sugar is better than nothing.

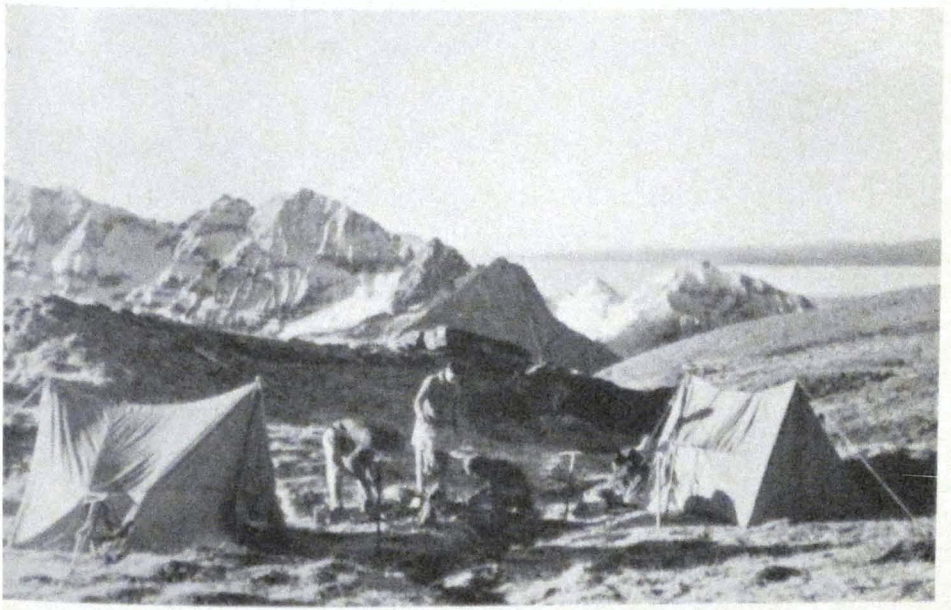
May 16th was a miserably ineffectual day. I woke shortly before 4 o'clock to hear a small bird already twittering, so I started the primus, and shouted to waken the other tent. We had all slept well in spite of the persistent dripping of water through the tent wall. Porridge and tea was all we needed for breakfast: porridge is an excellent high-altitude food; for fit and hungry climbers it provides bulk, and if one feels ill, it slips down quite easily; if made with plenty of sugar and butter, it will keep one going most of the day. There was a powdering of new snow outside and the water in the cooking-pots had frozen but it was a mild and tolerably clear morning, although dirty cumulus cloud was blowing

up from the east, looking singularly like the smoke of a great prairie fire as it glowed red in the morning sun. Snow-cock called to each other from hillside to hillside and a faint scent of deodars came up from the valleys below.

From a rocky eminence fifty feet above the camp we had an excellent view of Chomolhari. We looked almost straight up the long southern ridge, and although the perspective was very much foreshortened, we realised once again that we had something very formidable to contend with. After the Giant's Fang—one spur of which looked exactly like the steep side of the Inaccessible Pinnacle in Skye—a sharp snow and ice ridge led up to a broken ice hummock. From there a twisted knife-edge ice-ridge led to a long saddle at a higher level, which was scarred as it met the main mountain by a transverse gash of crevasses which we named the Great Divide. After this it rose, evenly but steeply, 3000 feet to the summit. It appeared that once we had passed the Giant's Fang the whole climb would be on snow and ice. Only on the west side of the final pyramid did the rocky foundations of the mountain appear through their icy covering.

Shortly before 6 o'clock we started up the rock-ridge which was still easy but more broken up than it had been lower down. Two lakes could now be seen in the valley to the east, and beyond the valley another ridge became a snow and ice arête and led to Takapu. It struck me that if we could not pass

WE REACH OUR FINAL RIDGE AT LAST



OUR CAMP JUST BELOW THE SNOWLINE ON CHOMOLHARI

the Giant's Fang, we might as an alternative cross the valley and try this other arête and then traverse back towards Chomolhari. The approach from the west which we had examined a day or two earlier seemed almost possible from here, although the slope leading from Khap-ri to the main pyramid of Chomolhari looked very broken and steep. Certainly these three approaches to the mountain were the only possible ones, and the central one, which we had eventually chosen, seemed to be the least impossible.

The valleys on either side of our ridge were clear, but ominous brown clouds were continually forming on the mountains to the south, and a quarter of an hour before we reached the Giant's Fang the mist completely enveloped us and did not lift for the rest of the day. We had seen that it was quite easy to climb up the south side of the Fang, but all the other sides were steep, especially the eastern side, which fell away in a series of precipices. We decided that it would be possible to skirt the foot of the western wall of the Fang and reach the snow-ridge in that way. The altitude we estimated as 19,000 feet, and this marked the beginning of the snow line, although there were a few isolated snow-fields just below the Fang. As nothing could be done until it cleared, we camped rather dismally at 10 o'clock in a snowy hollow to the south-west of the Fang.

All that day it snowed steadily with a gradually increasing wind. The tent leaked badly and we

spent a depressing day making dampers (pancakes without eggs), reading poetry aloud, singing and discussing everything under the sun, especially the futility of climbing in the Himalayas. When we looked outside there was nothing to be seen but an intense glare of diffused light and the ice-axe supporting the tent. No sound came from the porters' tent: they seemed to be capable of sleeping soundly all day and night. The outlook was anything but cheerful. The monsoon seemed to have broken and in any case all the new snow would make the mountain exceedingly dangerous. We had only six or eight days' food; Crawford's leave was running short, and from what we had seen of the mountain, it looked very difficult even for a strong party in ideal conditions.

Next morning, May 17th, dawned calm and fine. After lighting the primus and shouting to the other tent, I crept out of the tent feeling very exhausted, as often happens after a day of inactivity, struggled across the new soft snow and climbed to a point of rock overhanging the eastern wall of the Giant's Fang. The stars shone with unabated brilliance but the eastern sky had paled, and the mountains glimmered with a strange luminescence. Suddenly a finger of light touched the summit of Chomolhari and it glowed like the crater of an active volcano; I hurried back to the tent and took a colour photograph of the light slanting across the eastern face. There was a fine view down one ridge to the shadow-

filled valleys of Bhutan and to the great terraced mountain and other unknown hills beyond. To the south-west I could see the mass of Ma-song-chong-drong-ri which was also gleaming in the sun. Our view to the west, where all the larger peaks lay, was limited by the high ridge we had climbed a few days earlier.

We did not get away until 6.30 as the porters went to sleep again after I had called them. Retreating a little to get off the Fang, we traversed along, close in under the western wall in spite of broken rocks and a foot or two of soft snow, until we reached a snowy col at the foot of the north face of the Giant's Fang. In a prominent place we left a depôt of everything except the barest necessities for three or four days. This included half the food and paraffin, all books, the cinema camera, and Alpine line, and the remaining crampons (for it was clear that there was so much snow over everything that we should not need them). We roped for the first time here, and I led up an easy ridge between crevasses to the foot of a four-ridged dome we called the Dorjé (the handle of a *dorjé* or Buddhist symbolic thunderbolt is similarly shaped). The nearest ridge of this, though very sharp and steep, led easily to the summit of the Dorjé, about 600 feet above the start at the foot of the Fang. Nima was on my rope—a reliable second—and Kikuli, Crawford and Pasang on the other. The surface was perfect, a few inches of soft powder snow on firm névé. We crossed some

wide, safe bridges over a few crevasses which cut the arête, and worked our way along another steep ridge to a flat plateau, the long saddle we had seen from below. Here, unfortunately, though it was only 11 o'clock, we were forced to camp as the clouds came down. In the glaring, diffused light it was impossible to see what lay ahead, and, owing to the prevalence of crevasses, it was obviously unsafe to advance a step until it cleared. It looked as if the next quarter of a mile would be easy, then we would have to cross from our arête to the main mass of the mountain. This might stop us, as several large crevasses seemed to cut right across the ridge at the Great Divide. The next stage after this appeared to be a critical one. On the east side there was a long, very exposed and very steep fluted ridge of bare grey ice running up to the foot of the long slope. This was too severe a test for our party, but it might be possible to turn it on the left: we could not yet see how.

To the east of our tent the ice rose for a short distance, then fell almost vertically to a steep rock wall overhanging the valley of the two lakes. The ice arête on the far side of this valley looked more level, but appeared to be harder to get on to in the first place. The two ice-ridges met just before the Great Divide.

We were still using the Mummery tents, keeping the smaller bivouac tents in reserve. Crawford was going very well, but was unable to eat and felt

very exhausted and ill. Nima could not get much higher on account of his age and general unfitness; Kikuli, much to my surprise, was going rather badly today and spitting blood from time to time; Pasang went exceptionally well and made no fuss at all. That night we slept soundly, but I dreamt that Crawford and I were at sea in an open boat and huge waves kept towering over us and we could see the sun through green walls of water, but the waves never actually broke; our food was all in tins and we had no tin-opener; the skin was burnt off our faces and we had practically no clothes.

After breakfast of porridge and tea, I asked Nima if he minded staying in one of the Mummery tents alone while the rest of us made a bid for the summit. He seemed very relieved not to be going any higher and told us to get to the top and come back quickly. Kikuli seemed to be much better so I took him on my rope while Pasang and Crawford followed on the other. Although we started the primus at 3.30 it was 6 o'clock before we said goodbye to Nima and set off across a wide expanse of ice with six inches of newly fallen snow and a further six inches of soft snow beneath it. There was a terrible glare off the snow, but the Hamblin Everest glasses we were using seemed to eliminate the harmful rays without taking away too much light.

We kept right over on the east side at the Great Divide and crossed a narrow strip of snow without much difficulty. But it was the only possible way

across from the two southern ridges to the peak itself. From here the ice fell away steeply to the west in a series of broken serracs and tangled crevasses. The steep fluted ridge ahead looked as if it were made of bare hard ice. It was the most direct route, but I decided not even to attempt it. If the rope and ice-axe are used skilfully, one can fall off a slope or even down a crevasse and get away with it, but only once off a ridge of this sort. The alternative was a large, crescent-shaped basin to the west, broken by a bergschrund, or at any rate a prodigious crevasse, across which there appeared to be some flakes forming a precarious bridge, and above this more crevasses and serracs.

We cut steps down a short descent into the basin and crossed it to the foot of the steep surrounding ice-ridge. The snow was over knee-deep in the basin, and what with the altitude (we were now at 20,000 feet) and the ghastly glare of the sun on the new snow we found it very exhausting to move at all. Kikuli went ahead for a short time, but he was spitting blood again and was obviously unfit. Whenever we stopped, he fell asleep. I changed loads with him, but he was practically a passenger, and it was clear that he could not keep going for long. Pasang, who was a trifle over-eager, pushed ahead, so I let him lead. He went like a war-horse, but he had no idea what to do with the axe or rope; luckily he did not object to being told. Hail was falling now, but the visibility was still intermittently good.

The steep fluted ice-ridge formed the eastern wall of this crescent, and we found a way up some enormous flakes which, I presume, fell at some time from the ridge. But there was waist-deep snow at the foot of the ice and among the tangled fragments, as all the snow which had landed on the polished ice-ridge above had accumulated here. One pitch was rather severe, and we had to cut hand-holds up the all but perpendicular side of a gigantic flake of ice. It was just possible. The very middle of the crescent might have been possible, but it was very steep and bare in places and that route would have landed us among crevasses. I noted at the time that it would make a useful emergency descent.

From here we cut along several thin ice-ridges up to a platform, say 800 feet above the floor of the crescent, where we were stopped by a vertical wall of ice. Again we found a way up this by climbing up the side of a sharp flake that had fallen from an exposed ice-wall which showed much stratification. The edge of the flake had knee-deep snow on it which had to be scooped away as we climbed. Ahead of us stretched an even, steeply-sloping ice-field for another 800 feet, then a great, broken ice-fall guarded the approaches to the final arête. This looked impossible unless it could be turned on the right. There was some talk of camping, as we were all completely exhausted, and Kikuli was on the verge of collapse. But it was unsafe to camp where we were, owing to the danger of avalanches, and

I was particularly anxious to get a little further as the weather was fine for once, and it would be only just possible to get to the summit and back from a camp 3000 feet from the top.

I led for another hour over a ridge up to the west to avoid a vast crevasse, then up a steep slope of crutch-deep snow till we were among crevasses again, to avoid which I went further east and worked across to a slight saddle only a hundred feet from the drop into two-lake valley. This was the only place on this side of the mountain which was fairly safe from an avalanche, unless the whole of the south face came down, and that seemed almost possible after all the new snow. Wearily we camped at 3 P.M., after a terrific but successful day. I suppose we were at 20,000 feet. Kikuli fell exhausted in the snow and Crawford was groaning and unable to eat anything. After resting for some time in the snow we forced ourselves to put up the two bivouac tents and crawled inside them. They were very tiny and relied on ice-axes for poles. A zip-fastener secured the opening at one end. After supper of herrings, bread and tea, we all took aspirins (actually the brand we used were aspirin-caffein-phenacetin tablets) to cure our headaches, and went to sleep.

On May 19th, I woke everyone at 3 o'clock. We were all feeling the effects of the height and were very, very slow at getting ready to start. Indeed it was 5 o'clock before we emerged from the tents, just as it was getting light. The sun already glittered

on the snow and we could look right down our ridge, past the little black dots of Nima's tents and on to the Giant's Fang. Beyond again was the brown pyramid-shaped mountain and then mile after mile of blue and purple-shadowed ridges showing above valleys brimming with violet cloud. It was so beautiful that it almost recompensed us for the feeling of hopelessness that filled us as we looked towards Chomolhari. Crawford's leave was almost up, and he was not in a fit state to attempt the summit. When I called to the porters only Pasang, with a broad grin, emerged, while Kikuli eloquently put an arm out and emptied a cupful of blood into the snow; as it was only his teeth that were bleeding and nothing internal, we felt it was possible to leave him alone in the camp while the rest of us made a reconnaissance. We still spoke of it as an attempt on the summit, but I think we all realised that we could not hope to get there and back from this camp, considering the intrinsic difficulty of the climb, the unsuitable weather conditions, and the inexperience of the party.

The three of us tied on to one rope, and set off to find the best way up a vertical ice-fall, about twelve feet high, which seemed to prevent us from getting more than a few hundred feet above our camp. The slope was fairly easy and there were not many crevasses, but the snow was over knee-deep, so at this height progress was unbelievably slow. With the terrible glare from the new snow our faces were

very sore, in spite of the use of Anti-Lux which affords a certain amount of protection; our lips were very raw and swollen, and most of the skin was burnt off our nostrils and the lower part of the nose.

We worked steadily up to the right, only occasionally having to cut steps. Gradually it grew steeper and we realised that it was impossible to get over the ice-fall on this side. Crawford was completely used up and Pasang, who had started off too fast, was moving more and more slowly. It was obvious that it was only a waste of time to attempt the vertical ice-wall at this end, and the best we could do was to return to camp and get a good night's rest before attempting the western end of it on the following morning. With indescribable relief we turned in our tracks and returned to camp. At this height, especially under such conditions, any exertion is intolerable, and great will-power is needed before every upward step is taken; progress is so slow that it is necessary to breathe several times for every step forward. Climbers are apt to wonder why on earth they ever set out on such a forlorn quest and their great desire is to bring the expedition to an honourable conclusion—so long as somebody gets to the top, it need not be oneself—so that the expedition can get back to altitudes at which man was meant to exist and enjoy life.

I suppose we had climbed only 1000 feet from our camp, but it had seemed an intolerable distance. On the way down we were not troubled by the

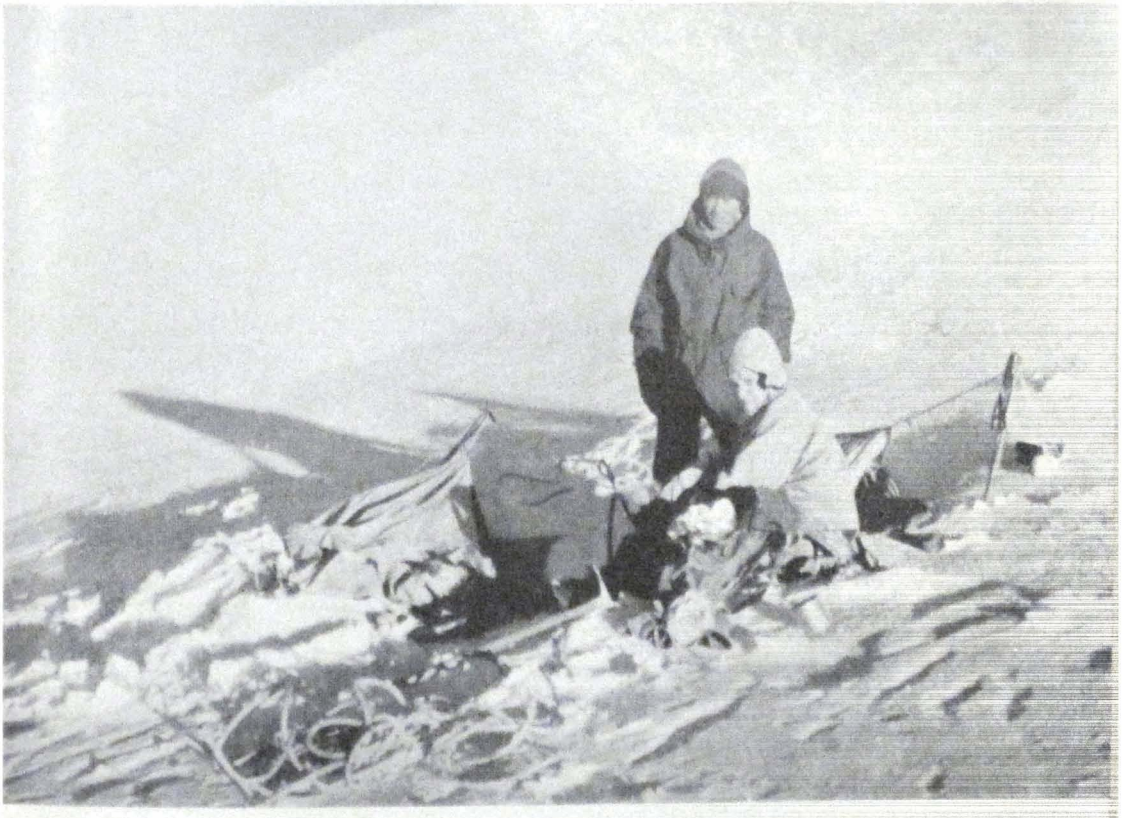
height, and using our footsteps, which made a thigh-deep tunnel through the soft snow, we were back at our camp again in half an hour. It is amazing to me that the new snow did not avalanche off these steep slopes, but we hardly heard a single avalanche all the time we were on the mountain. As we reached the camp, it started to snow again and we held a council of war. Crawford's leave was practically over; even if he returned at once he would only just be able to get back to Calcutta in time, and he was suffering from severe mountain sickness. It seemed very hard luck that, having got so far, he could not make another attempt on the summit, but in any case it was very improbable that if Pasang and I attempted it alone we would be able to get beyond the ice-fall. It was also questionable whether it was a justifiable risk to let Crawford and Kikuli return by themselves. I left the final decision until the following day; what we really wanted now was a long drink of tea and some aspirin tablets for our headaches.

It was a depressing afternoon. Snow pattered incessantly against the tent walls, which sagged in so that one could not avoid them, and then water poured in and also melted up from the ground-sheet which was designed to be light rather than waterproof. Crawford was dozing with his mouth open; his swollen face looked like a death-mask, except that it was skinned and burnt scarlet by the sun. Kikuli groaned aloud in the neighbouring tent. There

was nothing for it but to go to sleep and hope that things would seem less black in the morning.

May 20th dawned superlatively fine. I got up at 3 o'clock and made porridge and tea for breakfast. Kikuli was quite cheerful at the prospect of getting off the mountain and said he was capable of leading. Crawford, on the other hand, was feeling little better, but was sure he would recover once he was lower down. We had much sorting of gear to do before we could start, and as the two tents were frozen into the snow, it was not until 5.30 that we parted company. Pasang and I took one rucksack each, our ice-axes, a 100-foot rope, the better bivouac tent, two pitons, a double eider-down sleeping-bag each, and a small li-lo, my Contax camera and telephoto lens, a primus, a cooking-pot, mugs, plates, spoons, two boxes of matches and a tin-opener. For food we took three tins of sardines, a tongue and a tin of herrings, two pounds of pemmican, three-quarters of a pound of sweets, four half-pound slabs of chocolate, some oatmeal, sugar, butter, tea and pulled bread. Pasang also brought a bag of *tsamba* and a brick of Tibetan tea. I wore my felt-lined climbing-boots, four pairs of ordinary socks, cotton pants, shorts, grey flannel trousers, a flannel shirt, a high-necked jersey with sleeves and a smaller sleeveless pullover, an imitation-leather wind-jacket (this had a zip-fastener which had gone wrong, and was attached with safety pins), a single Grenfell-cloth windproof suit with a fur-edged hood, wool

CLIMBING AT 20,500 FT. CRAWFORD AND PASANG



CAMP AT 20,000 FT. BEFORE THE PARTY DIVIDED; CRAWFORD SITTING, PASANG STANDING (KIKULI SICK IN RIGHT-HAND TENT

mitts, horse-leather mitts, a balaclava wool helmet, and snow-glasses. Of medical supplies we took only a tube of Anti-Lux, some sticking-plaster and an envelope of aspirins. Although we hoped to be off the snow in a couple of days this outfit was designed to last us for as much as a week in case of necessity. We were carrying about 20 lbs. each.

We followed the tracks of the day before, although at first they were already filled with snow. About 800 feet above the camp we struck left and made for what appeared from below to be the only gap in the impregnability of the ice-wall. If this turned us back our last hope was to follow the ice-wall yet further left, and to try to force a way where it met the rock wall. We were lucky: there was one weak spot in the defences of the mountain where a huge flake of ice leant against a 20-foot vertical ice-wall which overhung a gaping bergschrund.

For two hours I cut foot- and hand-holds up the edge of this flake and then, standing on the top of it, I was just able to get on to the slope above where the ice was less tough and glutinous. Every now and then when I stopped to rest I looked down below to see if I could see anything of Crawford and Kikuli, about whom I felt extremely anxious. There was no sign of them, but I could make out Nima's two tents far away.

Having passed what I considered the worst obstacle our spirits rose, and we made further over to the left where the going was better, though rather

steeper. Here we found much less snow, as most of it seemed to have blown off the mountain. There was no distant view as clouds were forming all around us, though the sharp top of Khap-ri still showed disconcertingly high above us. Once again the slope steepened, and we had to use our ice-axes for every step, instead of having to cut one only now and then.

About 1 o'clock a blizzard came up very suddenly from the west. Perhaps we ought to have noticed its approach, but we were concentrating on the work of step-cutting, and before we had time to do anything but plunge our ice-axes into the snow and crouch over them, we were blinded by swirling snow and a maniac wind. It was impossible to move up or down, and we could only wait motionless, getting colder and colder as the minutes dragged by. In spite of my windproof hood, my nose and cheeks were frostbitten, and I dared not take a hand out of my glove to thaw them out. Several times it thundered, but no lightning lit up the gloom of the blizzard, for which I was glad, remembering an experience of a friend of mine on the Eiger, when an electric storm was attracted to his ice-axe and he was hurled off his foothold to find himself dangling on the end of the rope.

After two hours of this, I realised that we would have to do something to avoid being frozen to death where we stood. In lulls of the storm, I had made out the shadow of a dark serrac just above us, and others to the right; to descend over our flake in this

wind was out of the question; our only hope was to make our way up to this serrac, and at the foot of it to excavate a platform on which we could pitch our tent. The slope was dangerously steep, but the vertical wall of ice above would probably throw any avalanches clear of the tent.

Making the most of the few lulls in the storm, we fought our way to this place and started to cut away the ice. Pasang at first seemed to regard the situation as hopeless, but when the wind, as if quelled for the moment by our endeavour, died down a little, he joined me in the work of excavation. At last we had hewn a crazy platform big enough for the tents, which we put up as best we could. Unfortunately the zip-fastener was faulty, and whenever the tent ballooned with the wind, the opening tore apart and snow blew in, although we did our best to hold it together with safety pins. Taking off only our windproofs and boots we crawled into our sleeping-bags and fell asleep, feeling that we were lucky to be alive at all. It had been impossible to fix the side-guys at that angle and the snow which piled up on the outside of the tent was soon melted by the heat of our bodies and soaked into our sleeping-bags. When the excessive moisture made us too cold we awoke and made some Tibetan tea, with this we ate a mixture of *tsamba* and sugar, our first meal since breakfast. As usual we had been so preoccupied that we had forgotten to eat, a very stupid mistake.

That night I, at any rate, slept well, although snow continually poured over the protruding ice-wall above us and piled on to the tent so that we could hardly move. However it was wonderfully warm, though I wondered what would happen if a real avalanche came down: perhaps it would be thrown clear. There was little inducement to sleep on, and at 2 o'clock I struggled half out of my sleeping-bag, threw out the pile of snow that was piled up round our heads, and lit the primus. For breakfast we had porridge with plenty of butter and sugar, followed by Tibetan tea and *tsamba*. This camp was at about 21,500 feet, 1500 feet above our last camp and 2500 from the summit. If all went well and there were no long pitches of excessive difficulty, I thought it should just be possible to reach the summit and return in a single day. Accordingly we left our tent standing, though when once we had crawled out of it, it collapsed forlornly from the weight of snow on top of it, and took only one rucksack between us with my camera, two pitons, and some odds and ends of food for lunch.

In spite of our early awakening it was 4.30 before we emerged from the tent. Our buffeting by the wind on the day before had left us somewhat demoralised, and at such an altitude that means exhausted. There was no room to move inside the tent, and before we could put them on, our boots had to be thawed out over the primus. During the

night a pile of snow had blown in through the make-shift fastening of the tent, and though most of this had been scooped out before I lit the primus, what was left now melted with the heat of the stove.

It was light enough to start at 4 o'clock, and when we came out of the tent at 4.30 we found a beautiful morning, and ourselves perched on an appallingly steep ice-slope, which seemed to be totally disconnected from the rest of the awakening world. There was no wind, and the going was perfect. For several hours, with only short rests, we cut and kicked steps up the 2000-foot snow-slope. The warm flush of dawn faded from the snow and gave way to hard bright daylight. After an hour we had passed the summit of Khap-ri to the west-south-west; this peak is actually much higher than it appears to be from below. At first we kept well to the left and worked our way across to a reddish outcrop of granite separating the snow-slope from the tremendous rock precipice that seemed to fall almost sheer to the Phari plain. We tried the rock, but it was easier to keep to the snow, where the going was ideal. Up here all the loose snow had blown off the mountain or was packed by the wind into a consistency between ice and snow. Only occasionally, where exposed ribs of hard ice protruded through the snow, was it necessary to cut steps. As a rule a few scoops with the axe or a good kick with the boot was sufficient and most of the time we could move together, only stopping to belay over a par-

ticularly steep or difficult part. This was very different from the heart-breaking surface we had experienced lower down, where we sank in to the knee and even the fork. On this going we could achieve perfect rhythm—a kick, a pause, a step; a kick, a pause, a step—and thereby husband our strength and move at much greater speed. We took it in turn to lead, and Pasang went magnificently, his cheerfulness, determination and speed never flagging. Just before midday we reached the top of the long slope, after seven hours of most exhilarating and enjoyable climbing.

The view on the way up had been superb. When we left the tent we saw to the south a sea of level clouds with peaks rising from it, and as we climbed higher and worked more over to the western ridge, we could see down into the wooded valleys of Bhutan, separated by massive mountains of brown rock which only occasionally raised their heads above the snow-line. Then we looked into the dun-coloured Tibetan plateau where we could make out the mud-walled village of Phari with a white track threading the plain on either side. I hoped the good people there were watching us, though I supposed they were so certain that Chomolhari was unclimbable that they would not even trouble to look.

Gradually, as we approached the western ridge, all the mountains of the Eastern Himalaya that I had ever heard of swung into view, and we felt as

if we were on the very top of the world: isolated Ma-song-chong-dzong-ri to the south-west; Pau-hunri, westward across the Phari plain; the great mass of Kangchenjunga, with a cloud system all of its own; Siniolchu, Chomiomo, Pandim, Kabru, and 150 miles away to the west, yellowed by vast distance, unconquered Everest and Makalu.

At the top of the slope, Pasang was disappointed to see that the actual summit still lay another 500 feet above us to the north, though I had been prepared for it by my examination of the mountain from the plain. We were separated from the summit by a curved, undulating ridge of extreme sharpness which marked the culmination of the steep couloirs on the west. An error of judgment on this side would have resulted in a fall of thousands of feet down almost vertical rock to a frozen and ice-covered lake we could see far below. To the east one would have fallen over ice and snow, but the result would have been much the same.

Pasang asked me if it was necessary to go to the farther summit. It was a pertinent question. My body certainly had no desire to go on, and as the wind was blowing up from the west accompanied by tatters of cloud, the wisdom of further advance was questionable. But I knew it would not take us long to get downhill again to our camp and we should not have much difficulty in finding it unless another blizzard struck us. So we went on. Luckily the snow was fairly rotten up here and we

could kick away the top of the ridge and travel fast. Further gusts of wind made us crouch over our ice-axes, realising that it would be impossible to get back if the gale developed. The last 300 feet up a snow-slope which only became steep at the very end, was the easiest part of the whole climb. Soon we were shaking hands on the summit, which was a three-pointed snow dome, slightly corniced on the south and east. From here we could see towards Kampa Dzong and the rose-coloured hills of Tuna. When we reached the summit, the clouds were drifting up with icy breath from the west and dispersing again before they reached us. But they became more persistent, and as the wind had increased I realised we must hurry back over the exposed ice-ridge before the weather grew worse. At Pasang's request I took a photograph of him on the summit, then, at 1 o'clock, we started the descent.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Chomolhari: the Descent

EARLIER in this book I quoted a remark of the great explorer Stefansson to the effect that the story of a successful expedition makes dull reading, because, if all goes according to plan, there should be no exciting adventures to relate. If this is true, then our descent of Chomolhari would make an epic of incompetence, for one mishap followed hard upon another.

As we left the triple snow-ridge of the summit, shreds of cloud were racing over from the west, and I was anxious to get back over the exposed knife-edge ridge before the wind increased. At the top of the long slope we stopped to eat some barley-sugar; we had had no food for ten hours, except some sweets and chocolate which we had sucked as we climbed; we ought to have stopped to rest and eat something more substantial, but I was determined to return to our camp without delay, especially as it was now beginning to snow. I utilised a momentary clearing of the weather to take some more photographs, and we were ready to begin the descent.

The Tibetans had told us repeatedly that the stronghold of the goddess was impregnable. They

also warned us that if we presumed to set foot among her solitary snows, she would make us pay dearly for our temerity. This, and my desire for haste, must account for the disaster that so nearly befell us at the moment we began the descent. I have no clear recollection of how the fall started. We were standing together at the top of the long slope preparing to descend. I had finished my photography, and, while putting my camera away, told Pasang to go ahead, for when descending the leader goes last. A moment later he shot past me on his back. I managed to slip the camera into my windproof pocket and tried to throw my weight on to my ice-axe, just as the rope whipped tight, and the next instant I was falling on my back head-first down the slope. We fell fast, sometimes flying through the air, sometimes bumping and somersaulting over outcrops of ice. Several times I dug my axe point in, but before I could get enough weight on to it to stop us I was pulled on by the more rapid acceleration of Pasang, on whose Buddhist mind the spells of the goddess had such power that he let go his ice-axe and did not even attempt to retard our descent.

I was completely winded, my goggles were filled with snow, I could see nothing, and I knew nothing, except that we were falling faster and faster and that further down the slope became so steep that we would not be able to stop before rolling over the edge of the rocks, to drop 3000 feet into Tibet. I

remember wondering if Crawford and the other porters were watching our descent from some point on their way back to Phari; I hoped they were not. I recollect also hoping that my camera would not fall out of my pocket; actually it did, but I recovered it further down, though half the film was ruined. I suppose we fell 300-400 feet before my axe point cut home and I gradually stopped. I felt a tug at my waist. Pasang too had stopped—or had the rope severed? Lifting my snow-clogged glasses I could see him lying motionless, head downwards, within a few yards of the edge of the precipice, his ice-axe having come to rest above him. There I lay in agony for several minutes, choking, gasping, fighting for breath. At that height even moderate exertion is intolerable, and I had resisted the fall with every nerve and muscle in my body; now a black mist hid everything and I thought my lungs and heart would burst. Pasang was unhurt, but the fall had completely demoralised him, and until we were off the mountain and away from the influence of the goddess, I could no longer rely upon his nerve and judgment.

Keeping carefully to our upward tracks, we were back at our camp by 3 o'clock. A blizzard was threatening, and tired as we were I felt it essential to move our tent from its precarious ledge so that we could sleep soundly away from the danger and discomfort of falling ice and snow. But we had eaten nothing except barley-sugar and chocolate for

twelve hours and although we did not feel hungry I knew we must have a hot meal before any further exertion. We made some Tibetan tea, but one of the tent guy ropes was hidden under some snow beneath the primus, and when Pasang rummaged in the tent to find a mug the guy tightened and the tea was spilt. We had not the heart to boil up any more though we ate some sugar, prunes and sardines. Then we began to move the camp, the desire to lose no time in getting off the steep part of the mountain overcoming our bodily exhaustion. Wearily we dug away the snow debris, rolled up the tent and repacked our rucksacks. If only we could reach the sanctuary of the easier slopes below the ice-fall we hoped to rest thoroughly and then get off the mountain in a single day.

We had only descended about 300 feet, however, when the wind, which had died down while we struck camp, suddenly increased to blizzard force, and we were held up again in almost exactly the same spot where we had been stopped for two hours by a storm on the ascent. The ice-fall was immediately below us; we knew that there was only one certain way down it, a way which in ideal conditions it would be difficult to see from above, and which in a blizzard we could not hope to find, much less descend. We waited for an hour, getting colder and more miserable, then the wind dropped a little, and we began to retrace our steps to the camp-site we had just left.

VIEW SHOWING ROUTE. GIANT'S FANG AT BOTTOM RIGHT.
X LAST CAMP, 21,500 FT.

As soon as we started to climb upwards I realised for the first time that I was utterly exhausted. I had no strength left at all. That climb of a mere 300 feet back to our ledge is one of the most dreadful memories I have. Each single step required a concentration of will-power I was scarcely capable of exerting. The idea of just letting go and sliding over the ice-fall into the oblivion of the gaping bergschrund below was terribly attractive. I seemed to have lost all resistance to the biting cold of the wind. My rucksack was intolerably heavy and upset my balance. I found difficulty in breathing. I felt sick and had a dull ache at the back of my eyes.

It must have taken us well over an hour to regain those few hundred feet, and as soon as we reached the platform where our tent had been, we collapsed and fell asleep. Some time later, I do not know how long, we roused ourselves and put up the tent which was now frozen stiff and intractable. Then we crawled into our sleeping-bags, wearing windproofs, helmets—everything except boots—and again went to sleep. Later on we melted some snow over the primus and forced ourselves to eat some *tsamba* and sugar mixed with water.

The night was most uncomfortable as our sleeping-bags were soaked by the snow which had been melted by the heat of our bodies. The wind had gone round to the east and blew quantities of snow through the faulty opening of our tent, and the wall, with the weight of wet snow above it, pressed upon

us from above. Everything became drenched, and when the temperature fell during the night, we were too cold and miserable to sleep. In the morning I found that the matches in my inner trouser pocket had disintegrated, and the other box in my rucksack contained only half a dozen. Snow was still drifting gustily on a biting wind but the sun was shining coldly and I decided we must make a move. Pasang, however, seemed to be suffering from concussion and refused to eat or do anything but lie on the floor of the tent, watering at the eyes and moaning. He had broken one of his snow-glasses in the fall, and had groaned and sobbed all night long. He was more comfortable when I had covered up his bad eye with a handkerchief, but in no fit state to travel.

Breakfast of Tibetan tea and *tsamba* put more life and warmth in us until we found that Pasang's boots were frozen; he had slept with them under his head instead of taking them into his sleeping-bag, and now they were quite flat and hard. Before he could force his feet into them, I had to use one of our precious matches in order to relight the primus and thaw them out.

At last we left that miserable camp, but there was no sign of our track of the day before, and fine snow blew along the surface. Pasang seemed to have lost his sense of balance, and kept falling, so I had to go ahead, knowing that he would not be able to hold me if I slipped, cut the steps and then return to

him and steady him while he descended, almost lowering him on the rope. Once when he fell, his rucksack burst open, and our only cooking-pot as well as most of our remaining stores went bouncing down the glacier. It is extraordinary how difficult it was to find the route from above, and, as we failed to find the flake by which we ascended, we had to force a way down the ice-fall, and by the time we had accomplished this in safety it started to snow heavily and we had to camp about midday. If there had been any sign of our upward tracks we could have gone on in almost any weather and got off the mountain in a single day. As it was, the frequency of wide crevasses made it quite unsafe to move in a diffused light, especially as many of them were hidden by snow.

All night snow pattered dismally against the tent wall and we shivered so much in our wet sleeping-bags that it was almost impossible to sleep. Next morning, May 23rd, when we eventually packed up and got under way we found that we had to plough through snow thigh-deep, and in our exhausted state could make little headway. The glare from the new snow was worse than it had been before, our rucksacks were heavy with all the moisture our tent and sleeping-bags had absorbed, and Pasang was no better. It was impossible to move through the soft deep snow with any rhythm; all joy of progression had gone, only mechanical drudgery remained. We passed the camp from which Crawford and Kikuli

had returned and approached the amphitheatre which had caused us so much trouble on the ascent. From above everything looked so different that it was impossible to follow our earlier route but I had noticed then that a party could probably, if pressed for time, get down in the middle of the ice-fall; it was steep and exposed, but at the bottom there was a deep drift into which one could, if necessary, make a forced landing. To reach this 'shoot', however, we had first to cross a belt of about six crevasses, but before we could reach them the snow came on again, and, as we could only see about ten yards, we were again forced to camp, though it was not yet 11 o'clock.

Our position was becoming serious. Pasang, though he had climbed magnificently on the ascent, was now only a passenger. I was still well, but my face was terribly raw from the effect of the burning rays of the sun thrown up by the glare of the new snow. In spite of every precaution all the skin was off my lips, which clotted together when I slept and bled profusely when I forgot about them and suddenly opened my mouth. It is curious how much more liable one is to snow-blindness and sun-burn in diffused light; though, fortunately, through using amber glasses as supplied to Mount Everest Expeditions, I was not troubled by blindness or sore eyes in spite of most trying conditions. We were too miserable to bother what we ate, especially as our matches were now finished and we could no

longer use the primus for cooking food or to warm the tent and dry our clothes. We occasionally ate a little *tsamba*, sugar and snow mixed together, or some sweets and raisins, but I did not feel in the least hungry and in any case the *tsamba* tasted strongly of paraffin. On the other hand, we were tortured by thirst, though we could always melt a certain amount of snow on our boots for drinking water (snow melts rapidly on a black surface which absorbs heat and remains unmelted on one's white windproofs) and when we had to lie up during the day we could melt a certain amount of water on any dark object we put outside in the snow. Our chief discomfort was the fact that our socks and sleeping-bags became sodden wet, though we laboriously wrung them out each night and morning.

The nights were dreadful. We were usually forced by the bad weather to camp before midday, then we would get into our sleeping-bags and, being exhausted after the morning's exertions, would fall asleep at once. After a time I would be woken up by the cold and wonder if it was yet morning, to discover it was only just after midday. This would continue during the afternoon so that by the time night came and the temperature had fallen below zero, I was no longer tired and could hardly sleep at all. We used to shiver as if we had the ague, and our teeth chattered loudly and uncontrollably. I consider myself rather a connoisseur of uncomfortable nights. I have had my tent blown off me by a hundred-

mile-an-hour gale on the ice-cap of Greenland; I have, while camping far out on the Arctic pack, as related elsewhere in this book, known the sea-ice break up in a storm, and watched the water welling up through a widening crack across the floor of the tent, but for sheer, interminable, shivering misery, I have never known anything like those six nights passed in our bivouac tent on the snows of Chomolhari.

On the morning of May 24th, it was some time before I could get Pasang moving, and I was feeling sick and ill myself. More new snow had fallen in the night, and progress was slower than ever. Before we could descend the shoot into the amphitheatre we had to cross the crevasses which were so shrouded in snow that they were almost impossible to find except where they were wide and gaping. When we reached the first one, which was twenty feet wide in some places, I made for where it narrowed and was bridged by a level covering of snow. Probing carefully with my ice-axe, I found that it was here four or five feet across. It might have taken us half a day to go round and I decided that it was less of a hazard to jump it than to risk the bridge breaking under me. In so great a depth of snow the ice-axe becomes insensitive, and I could not tell how strong the bridge was. Now Pasang had a tiresome habit of letting out the rope rather jerkily, as if he had tied a clove-hitch round the handle of his axe, so I told him I was going to

jump and that he must let me have plenty of rope, and to make sure he understood—for we always conversed in Tibetan which neither of us spoke very fluently—I went back to him and loosened the rope.

But Pasang was not very intelligent these days, and when I was in mid-air over the crevasse there was a violent jerk on the rope and down I went, crashing straight through the frail snow bridge. I fell about thirty feet, but was unhurt, for the rope cut into the snow on the lip of the crevasse and that, combined with the weight of Pasang, dragged like an anchor through the deep snow towards the crevasse mouth, brought me slowly to rest. Not that there was much rest in dangling in an apparently bottomless crevasse with my face full of snow, my rucksack pressing on the back of my head and the rope squeezing the life out of me. At first Pasang simply hauled on the rope, to my extreme discomfort, while I tried to swing far enough to one side to get a footing on a ledge which protruded from one wall of the crevasse. After several attempts I managed, as I swung by, to grapple the ledge with my ice-axe and then to hold myself there by jamming the fingers of one hand into a crack in the ice, while I cut away the top of the ledge to make a place large enough for me to stand. Only then, after many Tibetan oaths, could I persuade Pasang to loosen his stranglehold on the rope.

When I had recovered from this frightful exertion,

I realised with horror that the crevasse was nowhere narrow enough to bridge in the normal way, *i.e.*, by cutting steps up both sides, and I remembered having read somewhere that it is quite impossible to get out of a crevasse by cutting steps up one wall —however, there was no alternative but to try. Having made myself as secure as possible on my ledge, I undid the rope, removed my rucksack, almost falling off the ledge during this complicated manœuvre, tied the rucksack on to the end of the rope, and, after much shouting, persuaded Pasang to haul it up to the top. When the rope came down again he had tied his red scarf on to the end of it —perhaps as a subtle hint to me that I was in danger.

Then I roped again, and set about a task which I suppose is the most difficult I have ever attempted. While Pasang hauled vigorously on the rope, I started cutting hand- and foot-holds up the vertical blue wall of ice. It was desperately hard work: I could rest a little by leaning on my axe which I dug into the opposite wall of the crevasse, but even then I had to descend to my ledge several times for every step I cut, and holds which were shaped for my fingers to grip soon got broken by my clumsy boots and had to be recut before I could use them again. And the ice was that peculiar tough, glutinous kind so often found in the Himalaya. Another difficulty was that I could not make Pasang understand when to steady me with a pull, and when to let go so that I could descend to my ledge. It

was only after three or four hours of most exacting work that I at last put my head over the lip of the crevasse where I saw, to my horror, that Pasang was sitting in the very middle of the frail snow bridge, not six feet away from the gaping hole through which I had recently disappeared. However, he seemed quite pleased to see me.

The next obstacle was the amphitheatre, which we reached after threading our way through the rest of the crevasses. We came down the 200-foot shoot in the middle of it without misadventure as the ice was hard and exposed and I could cut huge platforms from which I could safely lower Pasang to the full length of the rope and then cut steps for my own descent. The snow was waist-deep at the foot of the shoot and we could only just plough through it, taking two hours to reach the Great Divide, which we crossed without incident. The sun was terribly hot and the glare intense. Our progress became slower and slower until we had to stop and rest after practically every step and whenever we sat down in the snow we immediately fell asleep.

Not far below us, only two or three hours going in normal conditions, we could see a small lake just beyond the Giant's Fang, where the snow gave way to grass, azaleas and primulas. That vision soon vanished, however, as it came on to snow again, and we had to stop as there were crevasses ahead. We waited for an hour in the hope that it would clear,

but the weather grew worse and there was nothing for it but to camp. I dreaded another night on the snow, and had we been less exhausted we would have been greatly tempted to risk the crevasses and push on along the crest of the ridge.

The night that followed was the worst of all and we were lucky to survive it. In the periods of fitful sleep that alternated with bouts of uncontrollable shuddering, I had strange dreams in which I seemed to separate from my body and could return to pity the poor wretch fighting there for his life. In one of these dreams, which I still remember vividly, the Political Officer of Sikkim and all our Lhasa party were visiting the abbots of one of the large Tibetan monasteries. As usual they provided buttered tea and small ceremonial cones of rice piled high on silver saucers. As a rule we did not eat this, but took only a few grains between the thumb and second finger of the right hand and scattered them as an offering to the gods. But on this occasion I surreptitiously collected the rice from all the party in the loose blouse of my Tibetan robe and slipped out to give it to the two miserable men who, I knew, were lying half dead from exposure and starvation in a tent on the glacier outside. Just as I wakened 'myself' up and offered the rice I woke. In the other dreams I was always trying to escape with warm dry blankets or hot drinks to two people whose welfare was a matter of life and death to me, but always before I was able to help them I woke

up to find the wet tent wall clinging to my back or the tent flap beating against the frozen end of my sleeping-bag.

The next day, May 25th, we determined would be our last on the snow. We ate a few prunes, had the usual difficulty in pulling on our iron-hard boots, and got away at 6. Plodding painfully through very deep snow we passed the camp where Nima had waited for us, and crossed the Dorjé and final snow-ridge to the Giant's Fang. Here for the first time we found the track of the others and followed it to the dump where we left the rope and everything we could do without.

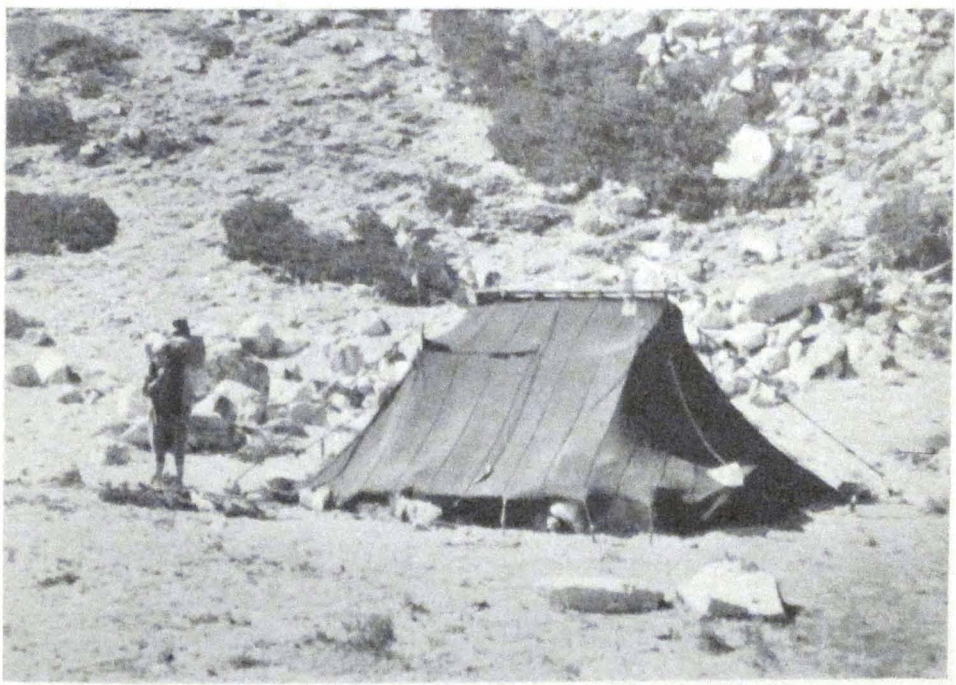
By 9 o'clock we were lying on the rocks by the lake while our bedding dried in the sun. We ate some sardines, bread and cake and made some cocoa, and watched a pair of cuckoos which flew past, noisily chasing each other, and a small tortoiseshell butterfly fanning its wings in the sun, and saw a bright scarlet vetch among the grey boulders. Life was very sweet. It was as though we had just awakened from a nightmare; already our adventures seemed scarcely credible. The others, hurrying back to Calcutta, had added to the dump at the Giant's Fang and although we left behind a Mummery tent, two ropes, and everything else we could spare, we were still carrying about 30 lbs. each, but we had only to drift downhill, snatching an occasional sleep where we rested.

When we reached the spring, where the yellow

primula was now in flower, we slept again, to be woken up by the singing of two women in pointed straw hats who came out of the wooden chalet and wandered over the hill to call the yaks in. We went into the chalet and found a benign lama sitting cross-legged on the floor droning the Buddhist scriptures, while a dishevelled but handsome Bhutanese girl wove a bamboo basket in the sunshine. They gave us some sour yak curd and fresh yak cheese and Tibetan tea. Although it was only 11 o'clock we determined to stay with them and rest, for we could hardly walk with our heavy rucksacks. Presently an old yak-herd returned with his animals, which were bringing juniper wood from the forest below, and the two women came in after picketing about sixty yaks outside the hut. To the music of their bells, we all ate boiled rice and drank hot yak milk. Never have I been so conscious of the change from cold, hunger and despair to comfort, safety and content. We had achieved our object in spite of the goddess and my only regret was that Crawford had not reached the summit with me. Had it not been for his return with Kikuli, the assault must have failed. We had dried our clothes and sleeping-bags in the sun, and that night slept soundly for twelve hours.

In spite of our long sleep, we were utterly exhausted and the twenty-mile walk to Phari was a nightmare. We crossed two high passes to the south of the La which we had used on the outward journey and at last, after being soaked by rain storm, we

MONK, BHUTANESE GIRL, AND YAKHERD



A YAKHERD'S TENT

came out, just as it grew dark, on to the wide Tremo La track, a few miles short of Phari. Here we stopped to drink Tibetan tea with some yak-herds, and in darkness and driving mist started up the final climb to the top of the Tremo La. It was snowing as we passed the summit cairns at 7.30, and we wandered down the far side in a stupor until we lost the track where it crossed a river. In the distance, near where we expected Phari to be, we saw strange lights flitting about like fireflies, appearing, moving slowly along, and then disappearing. I have never been able to account for these will-o'-the-wisp-like lights. After an hour's walking across the plain, when I was beginning to think we had missed the village, I heard a familiar noise—the barking of a dog with a very cracked voice. It guarded one of the monasteries on the outskirts of Phari, and I knew at once where we were. Soon after this I made out the outline of the fort, and then a faint but constant light—Phari, at last! The dogs all started barking and we stumbled into the dak bungalow to waken the watchman, who came out and gazed at us in amazement, having thought we were long since dead. He kept putting his hands together in front of him and then raising them reverently to his head and heart as if in prayer.

When we went to the post office to collect our letters we discovered that our continued absence had caused much concern. Friends at Gangtok and Kalimpong had organised a search party and

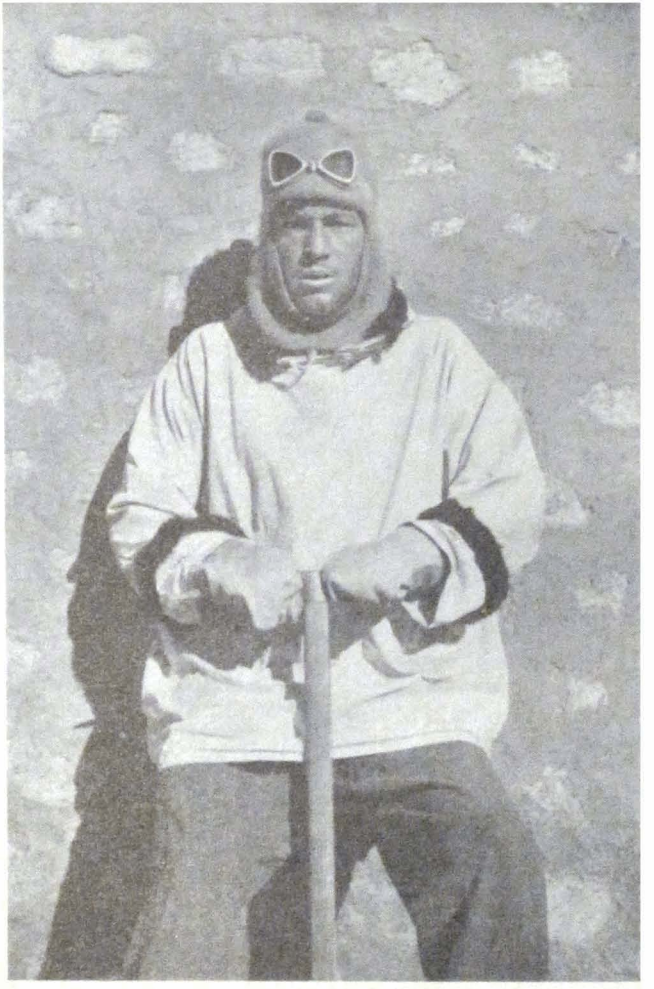
Crawford had returned to Yatung and was coming to Phari with another climber. Although we had agreed that whatever happened there should be no search parties, he had felt very anxious; knowing the bad weather we must have experienced and being the only person in the world who knew our whereabouts, he could not rest until he had found out what had happened to us.

As we left Phari next morning on two mules with high Tibetan saddles, we saw that all the yaks working in the fields were gorgeously caparisoned with flags and scarlet tassels. It was the first ploughing day of the year, and this ceremony was to implore the goddess of Chomolhari to give them a good harvest. I hoped she would treat them better than she had treated us. Looking back we caught our last glimpse of Chomolhari with snow clouds surrounding the base of the mountain and only the sharp summit showing, trailing its warning plume of wind-driven snow. We pushed right on to Yatung that day, sending our mules back from Gautsa. At Lingmatan we were met by some saddle ponies that Rai Bahadur Norbhu had most kindly sent out for our use.

We rested for a day at Yatung where a dinner-party was given to celebrate our safe return. Here I received several telegrams of congratulation, including one from His Excellency the Viceroy, with whom I had had the honour of staying at New Delhi; and an offer from the *Daily Mail*—heaven

Photograph by Mrs Fullalove

THE AUTHOR



THE AUTHOR AT PHARI AFTER CHOMOLHARI

knows how they had heard of our success—for the exclusive rights of the story. The three-day journey over the Jelep La to Kalimpong was very exhausting though we carried only the barest necessities, sending most of our gear by mule. The lower valleys, where primulas and blue poppies were now in full flower, seemed amazingly beautiful after our recent hardships, and in the comfort and peace of the Odlings' beautiful house at Kalimpong my health and spirits were soon restored. Pasang, when asked by a Nepali-speaking friend of mine what he felt like on the descent replied, "I lost all love for my body, but the sahib brought it back safely, and I hope we shall climb another mountain together". I hope we shall.

I lost fifteen or twenty pounds' weight on the climb and both Pasang and I found that we had no feeling at all in our feet. I was afraid that they had been seriously frostbitten but though this numbness lasted for several weeks it was only superficial. Another curious effect of the climb was that a deep groove appeared across my finger-nails and toe-nails, marking the time, I suppose, when my life was at so low an ebb that its customary supply of calcium was cut off.

The late General Bruce, in an after-dinner speech to the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District, referred to my safe return from Chomolhari as the Eighth Wonder of the World. As his other remarks were almost embarrassingly

complimentary I trust he did not mean to imply that I had broken the unwritten law of British mountaineering by stretching the margin of safety beyond justifiable limits.

Had the diabolical stratagems of the goddess prevailed, I could have been blamed—posthumously—for my rashness and temerity in laying siege to so formidable a stronghold with a small and inexperienced party; but not, I think, for my reluctance to turn back when I had once accepted her challenge. For, having decided to go on, I took all possible care, and the evil that befell us had no connection with our weakness but was caused by a series of misfortunes which might have happened to the strongest party.

The season following our ascent of Chomolhari was remarkable for the richness of the harvest, especially in the plain of Phari. By this gift of fecundity the goddess condoned our violation of her virgin snows.

GLOSSARY OF MOUNTAINEERING TERMS

abseil (to)—to descend by a fixed rope which is passed round the shoulder and thigh.

aiguille—a needle-like peak of rock or ice.

arête—the crest of a ridge.

avalanche—a large mass of snow, often mixed with earth and ice, loosened and descending swiftly down a mountain-side.

belay (to)—to secure the rope round the ice-axe or round a projection of rock or ice.

bergschrund—the great crevasse separating the top of a snowfield or glacier from the mountain-side.

brèche—a narrow gap in a ridge.

buttress—a rib projecting from a rock or ice face.

cairn—a pile of stones.

chimney—a vertical narrow rift in a rock face.

col—a pass (*La* in Tibetan).

cornice—an over-hang of snow or ice formed on a ridge by the wind.

couloir—a steep gully in a rock or ice face.

crevasse—a fissure in a snowfield or glacier.

flake—a flat piece of snow or ice partially detached from the main body.

gendarme—(literally, a policeman)—a pinnacle on a ridge.

glacier—an immense mass or river of ice in a high mountain valley, formed by the descent and consolidation of the snow that falls on the higher ground.

glissade—a method of descending snow-slopes by sliding.

gully—a steep ravine in a mountain-side.

ice-fall—a much crevassed part of a glacier formed by irregularities beneath the ice.

moraine—a pile or line of stones carried down or deposited by a glacier.

pitch—a section of a climb, often from one suitable belay to another.

piton—a spike, usually with a ring attached, which can be driven into ice or a crack in the rock for fixing a rope.

scree—steep slopes of loose rock.

serrac—ice pinnacles formed by intersecting crevasses.

traverse (*to*)—to make a more or less horizontal passage across a mountain-side; also used to describe a climb up one side of a mountain and down the other.

INDEX

Abraham, George, 41
Acaster, —, 134
Aiguille d'Argentière, the, 42
Allwein, Dr., 99
Alpine flowers, 21
Alps, the, 17, 19, 20, 45, 46
Amo Chu, 212, 215
Ang Babu, 87, 119, 120, 123, 152, 156, 161, 173
Angmagssalik, 35
Ang Nima, 78, 87, 100, 106, 107, 119, 120, 125, 152, 156, 161-75 *passim*, 179, 182, 204
Antarctic, the, 37, 41
Arctic, the, 35, 37, 266
Arlberg Kandahar, the, 30
Atlas Mountains, the, 47
Avallon, 28
Aysgarth, 42, 44

Baffin Land, 35
Bailey, Col., 137
Baird, Gen. Sir Douglas, 138
Bauer, Dr. Paul, 62, 77, 97, 98
Bengal, 55, 56
Ben Nevis, 10, 17, 20
Ben Rhydding, 2
Bhamo, 127
Bhutan, 56, 59, 65, 141, 197-202 *passim*, 213, 220, 224, 226, 229, 235, 239, 254
Bhutan, Maharajah of, 137, 198, 199, 200, 214
Black Force, 4
Black Sail Pass, 39
Borrowdale, 38
Botnia, the, 29
Boustead, Major, 97
Bow Fell, 40
Brandreth, 39
Brèche de la Meije, the, 21-2
Brèche Zsigmondy, the, 25
British Arctic Air-Route Expedition, the, 34
British Graham Land Expedition, the, 41
Broad Stand, 39
Broderick's Crack, 16
Bruce, General, 275

Cader Idris, 6
Calcutta, 52, 55, 201, 202, 204, 205, 271
Cambridge, 7, 8, 14, 28, 34
Cambridge Mountaineering Club, the, 7-8
Campbell, Dr., 94
Capel Curig, 8
Carré, Glacier, 24
Cautley Spout, 4
Central Buttress, 14
Ceylon, 49-50
Chamonix, 42
Champithang, 211, 212
Chang Tang, 149
Changu, 207, 210
Changu Lake, 209
Chanson Glacier, 167
Cheval Rouge, the, 24
Chew, F. R. G., 20, 23, 25, 26
Chomiomo, 167, 255
Chomolhari, 167, 197, 198, 210-221 *passim*; ascent of, 222-56; descent of, 257-71; 274, 275, 276; Monastery, 222
Chorten Nyima La, 152, 174, 175, 181
Chu-gya Monastery, 228
Chumbi Valley, 213
Chungtang, 135, 141

Chuni, Ranee, 137
Clough Head, 40
Col de Galibier, 27
Cooke, J. K., 46, 82, 85, 86, 93, 105-10 *passim*, 117-31 *passim*, 138, 142, 145, 148, 150, 154, 156, 162, 165, 167, 176, 178
Coombe Scaur, 3, 4
Cow and Calf Rocks, 2
Crawford, Charles, 201-11 *passim*, 215, 217, 218, 222, 223, 224, 235, 238, 247, 248, 249, 259, 272, 274
Crib Goch ridge, the, 223, 231
Cuillins, the, 19

Dalai Lama, the, 127-8, 138, 196
Dale Head, 39
Darjeeling, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 94, 95, 96, 201, 202, 203, 208
David-Neel, Madame, 77
Davos, 30, 33-4
Dehra Dun, 202
Delhi, 128, 129
Derwentwater, 39
Dikchu, 68, 69, 70, 136, 194
Doigt de Dieu, the, 25
Dollywaggon Pike, 2, 40
Dolmetsch, Dr., 45
Dongkya La, 94, 95, 134
Dorjé, the, 239, 271
Douglas Boulder, the, 17
Dow Crag, 16
Drepung Monastery, 196
Dunmail Raise, 2, 40

Easter Gully, 16
Enari, Lake, 43
Eskdale, 39
Esk Hause, 39
Eskimos, 36-7
Everest, Mt., 14, 38, 46, 63, 96, 97, 137, 141, 167, 198, 255
Everest Expeditions, 62, 78, 187, 198, 199, 203, 216

Fairfield, 40
Faroe Islands, the, 29, 35
Fell Record, the, 38-41
Fell and Rock Climbing Club, the, 275
Finch, —, 80, 82
Fjord, Lake, 37
Fluted Peak, the, 151, 152; ascent of, 172-8; 179, 181
Fort William, 17
Freshfield, Sir Douglas, 94, 96

Ganden, 196
Gangotri, 45, 144
Gangtok, 59, 63, 64, 65, 76, 77, 88, 94, 129-41 *passim*, 181, 188-210 *passim*, 214, 273
Gashed Crag, the, 18
Gautsa, 216, 217, 274
Geille Tea Gardens, 62
German Kangchenjunga Expedition, the, 97
German Nanga Parbat Expedition, the, 203
Giant's Fang, the, 232, 236, 237, 239, 245, 269, 271
Gnatong, 202, 207, 210, 214
Göteborg, 48
Gould, B. J., 59, 127, 128, 129, 130, 137, 170, 181, 188, 199, 207, 214
Graham, Bob, 40
Graham, Dr., 57
Grand Pic, the, 24
Great Calva, 40
Great Divide, the, 236, 240, 241, 269
Great Dod, 40
Great End, 39
Great Gable, 9, 39

INDEX

Great Langdale, 9
Great Rangit River, 95
Green Gable, 39
Green Lake, the, 77, 83, 85, 86, 87, 91, 92, 96, 100, 101, 105, 107, 108, 109, 124
Greenland, 34-7, 38, 41, 141, 174, 266
Grenoble, 20, 26, 28
Grepon, the, 42
Grialetch Hut, 32
Grisedale, 40
Grisedale Tarn, 40
Guicha La, 95, 97
Gyantse, 57, 65, 128, 130, 144, 197, 198

Hamblin, —, 80, 82
Harris, Miss Audrey, 137
Harrison, Jock, 126, 130, 131, 136, 138, 142, 145, 148, 152-62 *passim*, 167, 168, 185, 190
Haslemere, 45
Heather Traverse, the, 18
Helvellyn, 2, 6, 38, 40
Hicks, T. E., 9, 15-16, 45
Hidden Glacier, the, 106
High White Stones, 40
Himalaya, the, 17, 19, 44, 45, 46, 56, 99, 113, 173, 174, 197, 206, 238, 254
Himalayan Club, the, 60, 202, 203, 205
Hindscarth, 39
Holdsworth, R. H. L., 31, 32, 201
Honister Pass, 39
Hooghli, the, 52
Hooker, Sir Joseph, 94
Hudson Bay, 35

Iceland, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35
Idwal Slabs, 8
Ilkley, 2
Inaccessible Pinnacle, the. 17, 236
India, Government of, 128
Ingram, M. J., 31, 32
" Isaac ", 42-3
Ishwar Singh, 60, 78, 85, 86, 87, 106, 108, 124, 125
Islamia College, 202

Jelep La, 207, 210, 212, 213, 275
Jonsong Glacier, 165 ; Peak, 165, 167
Jun Singh, 60, 86, 87, 110, 125
Jyekundo, 139, 195

Kabru, 255
Kakapu, 197
Kalimpong, 52, 56-9, 63, 65, 137, 199, 201, 204, 205, 219, 273, 274, 275
Kamet, 202, 203
Kampa Dzong, 96, 256
Kangchenjan, 94
Kangchenjunga, 44, 58, 60, 62, 85, 96-111 *passim*, 132, 155, 203, 255 ; Glacier, 102
Karasjok, 42, 43
Karesuando, 42
Kargyu Monastery, 212
Karo-La, 197
Karponang, 208
Kashag, 196
Katmandhu, 137
Kaulback, Ronald, 65
Kazis, 140
Kellas, Dr., 94, 96, 173
Kendal, 2
Kendal Otter Hounds, 7
Kern Knotts Crack, 9
Kesch Hut, 31
Keswick, 38, 40, 41

Khap-ri, 230, 237, 250, 253
Kidd, —, 203
Kikuli, 203, 216, 217, 222, 239-249 *passim*, 272
Kilo, 125-6, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 158, 173
Kipak, 87, 100, 110, 124, 125, 144
Kirk Fell, 39
Kopup, 210, 211
Korayedu, 174, 180, 183, 184

Labrador, 34
Laccadive Islands, the, 49
Lachen, 65, 73, 75-6, 80, 81, 85, 86, 88, 94, 97, 105, 131, 134, 138, 142, 144, 147, 159, 183, 187, 188, 190, 191, 192, 208, 212, 214
Lachung, 73, 94, 95
Lagerberg, the, 105
La Grave, 20-21, 26
Lagyap La, 209
Lahore, 201
Lake District, the, 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 38, 81, 275
Lama Anden, 80, 82, 85, 94, 96, 97
Langdale Pikes, 40
Langpo Chu, 148, 150, 151, 173, 179; La, 155, 157, 161; Peak, 151, 155, 164, 165, 167, 174; Glacier, 167
Lapland, 42-4
Lattimer, —, 173
Les Trois Pucelles, 20
Lhasa, 57, 65, 95, 128, 129, 130, 139, 140, 195-202 *passim*, 212, 213, 216
Lhasa, British Diplomatic Mission to, 138, 195, 200, 214
Lhasa Trade Route, 202
Lhonak, 83, 96, 106, 112, 113, 129, 131, 138, 141, 142, 146, 147, 167, 204; Chu, 83, 133, 174, 181, 184, 186, 187, 188; Glacier, 155, 156; Valley, 175, 176
Lhotse, 167
Lingmatan, 215, 274
Little Gully, 9
Lloydia, 21
Longland, Jack, 14-15, 20, 25, 26
Longridge, 167
Looking Stead, 39
Ludlow, F., 128
Lune, the, 3
Lungnak La, 148, 183, 187, 188, 189

Macdonald, David, 57
Madras, 50
Mahn Bahadur, 155, 156, 158, 170, 172
Makalu, 167, 255
Maldive Islands, the, 49
Maloja, 30
Mangan, 71, 136
Manipur, 127
Manning, Thomas, 220
Martyn, J. A. K., 202
Ma-song-chong-drong-ri, 239, 255
Matlock, 14
Meconopsis horridula, 224
Meconopsis simplicifolia, 133
Meije, the, 20, 27, 205
Milestone Buttress, 8
Minacoy, 49
Mont Blanc, 42
Monte Rosa, 31
Morecambe Bay, 4
Morgan, Captain, 214, 215
Morgan, Mrs., 215

Namchi, 204
Namgay, 94

Nanda Devi, 137
Nanga Parbat, 168, 203
Nansen, F., 37
Natu La, 206, 208, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214
Neame, V.C., Brig. Philip, 138
Nepal, 60, 137, 141; Gap, 96, 101; Gap Glacier, 92, 101, 106, 112; Peak, 120
Newlands, 39
New West Climb, the, 9
Nicholson, C. E., 45
Nicholson, R. C., 45-6, 49, 60, 64, 69, 89, 93, 105, 110, 117-123 *passim*, 129, 142, 144
Nima Tendrup, 203, 208, 216, 217, 221, 222, 225, 230, 235, 239, 241, 245, 249, 271
Ning-dzing-zong-ka, 197
Norbhu, Rai Bahardur, 200, 274
North Cape, the, 43
North West Climb, the, 10

Odell, —, 198
Odling, Norman, 57, 201, 204, 205
Odling, Mrs., 201, 204, 219
Osmaston, —, 173

Pallis, Marco, 44, 45, 46, 49, 52, 59, 60, 63, 65, 72, 73, 77-125 *passim*, 129, 130, 142, 144, 155
Pan-American Arctic Air-Route Expedition, the, 35
Pandim, 96, 255
Parsenn Derby, the, 30
Pasang, 203, 207, 222, 239-48 *passim*, 254-69 *passim*, 275
Passenram Glacier, the, 99, 112, 119
Pauhunri, 94, 167, 225, 255
Pavey Ark, 9, 24
Penlong La, 68, 132, 135, 136, 194
Perim, 49
Peshawar, 202
Phari, 197, 204-18 *passim*, 219-220, 221, 223, 225, 229, 254, 255, 259, 272, 273, 274, 276
Phintzu, 156, 158
Phodang Monastery, 68
Pillar Rock, 9, 15, 39
Pipitang, 212, 213
Pircher, Herr, 99
Pitz Grialetch, 32
Pitz Kesch, 31, 202
Podong Chu, 150; La, 167
Porchobello Hut, 32; Glacier, 31
Portinscale, 39
Primula denticulata, 212
Primula Royalei, 133, 190, 224, 233
Primula scottica, 21
Primula sikkimensis, 191, 212
Promontoire Hut, 21, 22
Punakha, 198
Pyramid Peak, the, 112, 113, 115, 120, 151, 152, 154, 155, 157, 164, 165, 166, 169, 171, 177
Pyrenees, the, 201

Quetta, 65

Raeburn, Harold, 97
Rangpo, 64
Recorder, the, 46, 52
Red Pike, 39
Red Sea, the, 48-9
Requin, the, 42
Reykjavik, 29
Richardson, Hugh, 198, 200, 202
Rinchen Bhutia, 78, 87, 100, 119, 120, 125
Rinchen Sherpa, 78, 87, 107, 119, 120, 125, 144, 150-54 *passim*

Ringbi Chu, 96
Roaf, R. C., 46, 52, 59, 77, 78, 80, 93, 106, 109, 110, 113, 115-22 *passim*, 124, 129, 142
Robinson, 39
Rogni Chu, 208
Rymill, John, 41

Saddleback, 40, 41
Salur, 53-4
Sams, Captain, 126, 136, 159
Sarsura, the, 32
Sayok Chu, 181, 184; La, 183, 184
Scafell, 14, 24, 38, 39
Schaller, —, 102
Scott, Captain, 41
Scott, J. M., 34
Seat Sandal, 40
Sedbergh, 3, 17, 38
Sera Monastery, 196
Sergeant Man, 40
Sgurr nan Gillean, 17
Shackleton, Sir Ernest, 41
Shanghai, 127
Shipton, E., 206
Sierra Nevada, the, 47
Sikkim, 44, 46, 56, 59, 94, 95, 112, 116, 120, 127, 129, 137, 182, 211, 213
Sikkim, Maharajah of, 60, 137, 139
Siliguri, 55, 56, 65
Simla, 201
Simvu, 44, 59, 60, 71, 84, 85, 93-123 *passim*, 130; Glacier, 107, 109, 110, 114, 125; Saddle, 96-113 *passim*, 168; Upper Saddle, 109, 111, 112, 113, 124
Singhik, 72, 96, 135, 141
Siniolchu, 44, 59, 60, 71, 84, 85, 93, 96, 102, 112, 114, 116, 117, 119, 132, 167, 255
Siniolchu, Little, 85, 114
Skiddaw, 38, 40, 41
Skye, 10, 17, 201
Smythe, F., 202, 203
Snow Leopard Gully, 175
Snowden, 10, 19, 24, 46
Sola Khombu, 60
Sphinx, the, 155, 157, 164; ascent of, 166-70; 172
Spitsbergen, 34
Steel Fell, 40
Steeple, 39
Stefansson, —, 41, 257
Stobart, —, 173
Stybarrow Dod, 40
Sugarloaf, the, 101, 115
Sur-La, the, 226, 231, 232
Sutherland, 21

Takapu, 197, 230, 236
Talung, 99, 103, 112, 117, 118, 119, 124, 133; Chu, 96; Glacier, 95, 97, 122; Monastery, 83, 96; Peak, 117, 155
Taly-llyn Lake, 6
Tang La, 78, 81, 197, 198
Tangu, 148, 149, 183, 187, 188, 190, 191
Tashi Lama, the, 138-9, 195, 196
Teesta Bridge, 56, 64
Teesta Gorge, 56, 58, 94; River, 56, 70, 72-3, 95-6, 97; Valley, 95, 103, 204, 208
Tent Peak, the, 101, 110, 115, 132, 151, 155, 156, 161, 164, 167, 174; La, 167
Terai, the, 56
"The Lama", 95-6
Thomas, Eustace, 38
Threlkeld, 40, 41
Tibet, 46, 56-71 *passim*, 77, 88, 113, 120, 127, 129, 130, 139,

149, 167, 182, 195-213 *passim*, 226, 258
Tilman, H. W., 137
Tobgay Dorje, Rajah, 137, 199, 214
Tobin, Col., 97
Tombazi, N. A., 97
Tong, 72
Tongshyong Glacier, 97
Tour Noir, the, 42
Tower Ridge, 17
Tremo La, 220, 273
Tryvfan, 8, 17-18
Tsarong Shapé, 196
Tsetang, 81, 131, 133, 144, 145, 147, 187
Tsungtang, 73
Tumlong, 94
Tuna, 197
Twins, the, 98, 101, 110, 112, 132

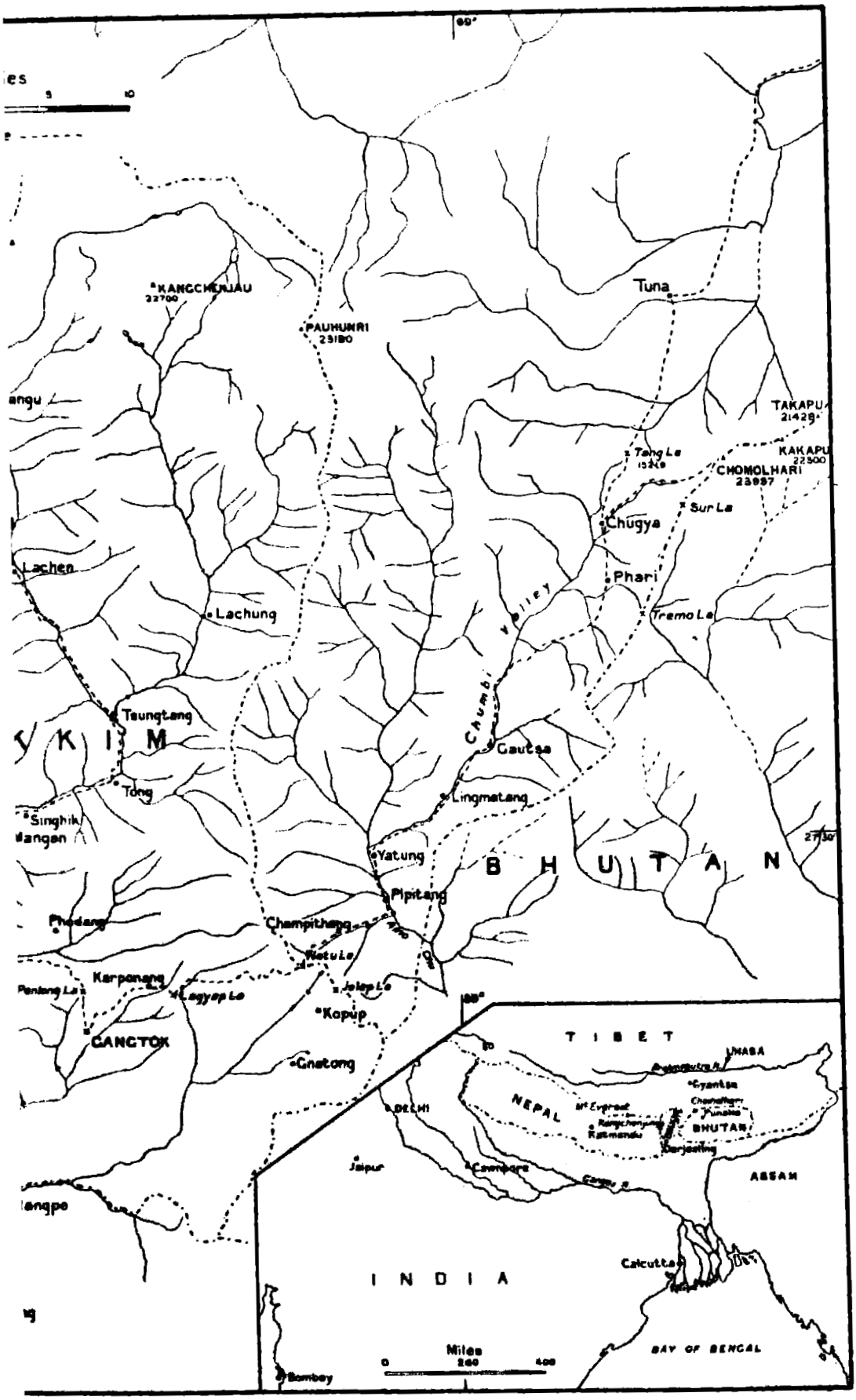
Vadsö, 43
Vallorgia Pass, the, 32
Vizagapatam, 50

Wager, Lawrence, 14, 20, 25, 26
Wakefield, Dr. Arthur, 38, 40
Wales, North, 6, 8, 17
Walker's Gully, 15
Waller, —, 134
Ward, Kingdon, 65
Warren, Charles, 14, 45
Wastdale Head, 39
Watkins, Gino, 14, 34, 37
Westmann Islands, the, 29
White Claud, 95
Williamson, —, 65
Winnipeg, 35
Wood Johnson, G., 62, 63, 202
Woodhouse, Bobby, 17, 38

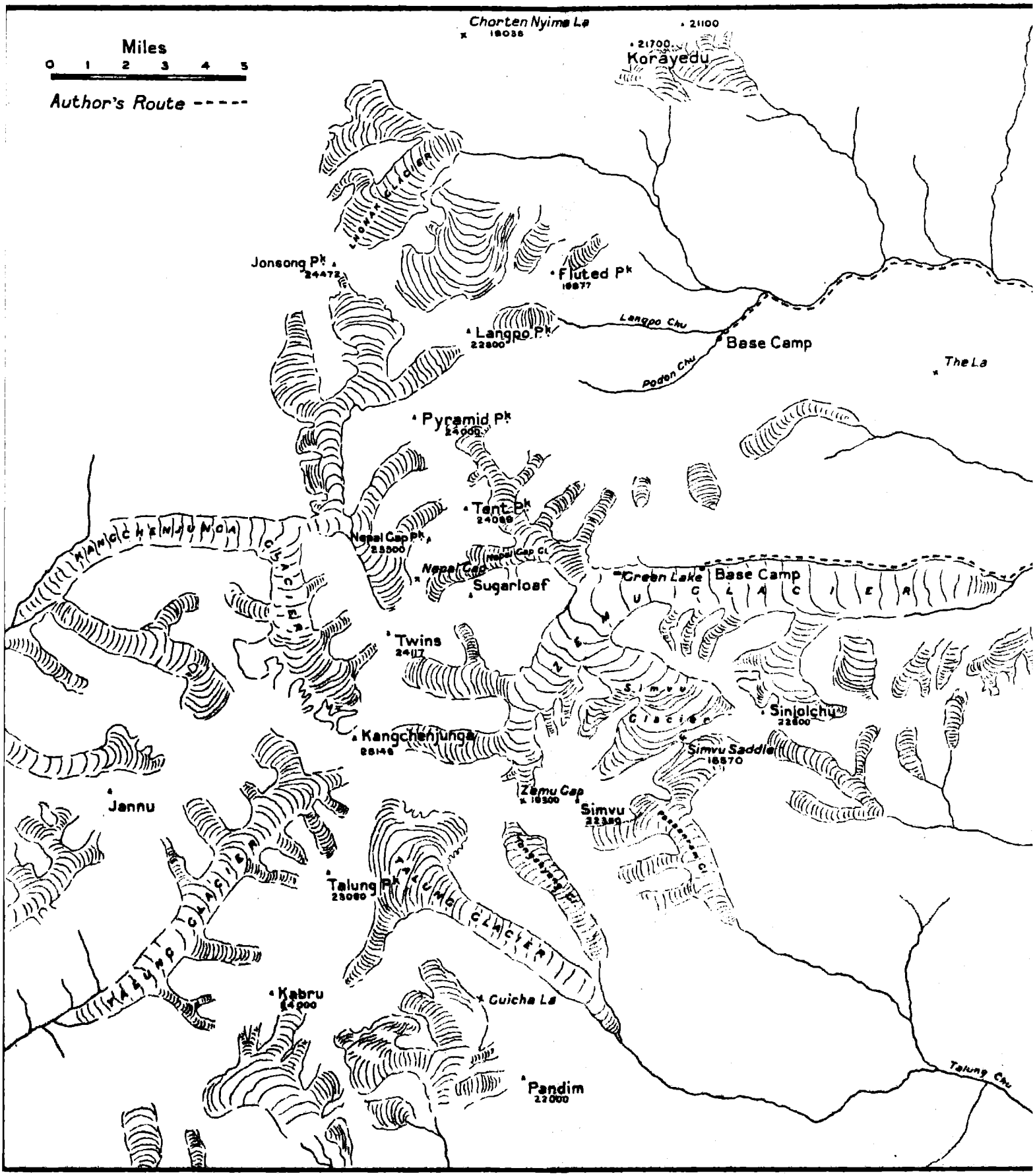
Yangtse, the, 127
Yatung, 191, 210, 212, 213, 214, 215, 221, 274
Yeumtso La, 96
Yewbarrow, 39
Yorkshire moors, the, 2
Young, Geoffrey Winthrop, 7
Yunnan-Fu, 127

Zemu Chu, 81, 83, 84, 94, 96, 97, 133, 145; Gap, 96, 97, 98, 100, 102, 103, 137; Glacier, 44, 46, 60, 65, 77, 91-109 *passim*, 117, 149, 150, 168, 204; Ram, 78, 81, 134; Valley, 95, 146

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED,
EDINBURGH



Map showing Author's route for his ascent of Chomolhari



Kangchenjunga and surrounding Glaciers